■ Lifestyle / D2

Playgrounds of the rich and famous

■ World / A8

600 Iraqis killed in week of chaos

■ Entertainment / A24

Camile out but happy and relieved

■ Sports / A21

Mickelson wins first major

Tanong ng Bayan / A19

Malikhaing Pinoy: World-class pa rin ba?

NGAYONG ALAS-10 NG GABI SA ABC

INQ TV

Mike, Chiz: Friends from rival campaigns

WALANG PERSONALAN, PULITIKA LANG!

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Carlito Pablo

THEY'RE young (34), articulate—and on opposing sides. But Michael "Mike" Defensor and Sorsogon Rep. Francis "Chiz" Escudero, campaign

MIKE/ A4

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

Tuesday, April 13, 2004 ★★ 44 pages / 4 sections / vol. 19 / no. 125 P18

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Ombudsman clears Gloria in Maynilad 'bailout' deal

By Volt Contreras

THE OFFICE of the Ombudsman yesterday junked the plunder case filed against President Macapagal-Arroyo, two officials of the Department of Justice and 10 officers of Benpres Holdings in connection with the alleged government bailout of the debt-ridden

OMBUDSMAN / A6

GMA now leads FPJ, says latest survey

Still very close fight, Pulse Asia poll shows

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

IT'S STILL a "very close fight," but President Macapagal-Arroyo has finally gained a lead over actor Fernando Poe Jr., breaking the statistical tie that both had found themselves in the past two months, a private polling firm said yesterday.

Pulse Asia Inc. said that of the 4,800 nationally representative registered voters it polled from March 27 to April 4, 34 percent said they would vote for Ms Macapagal, while 31 percent said they would choose Poe.

Ms Macapagal enjoyed a slim lead of 1.6 percentage points as the survey had a margin of error of plus or minus 1.4 percent at the 95-percent confidence level.

"This is the first time that President Arroyo has a statistically significant lead, although small, over Mr. Poe," Pulse Asia executive director Ana Maria L. Tabunda said in a statement.

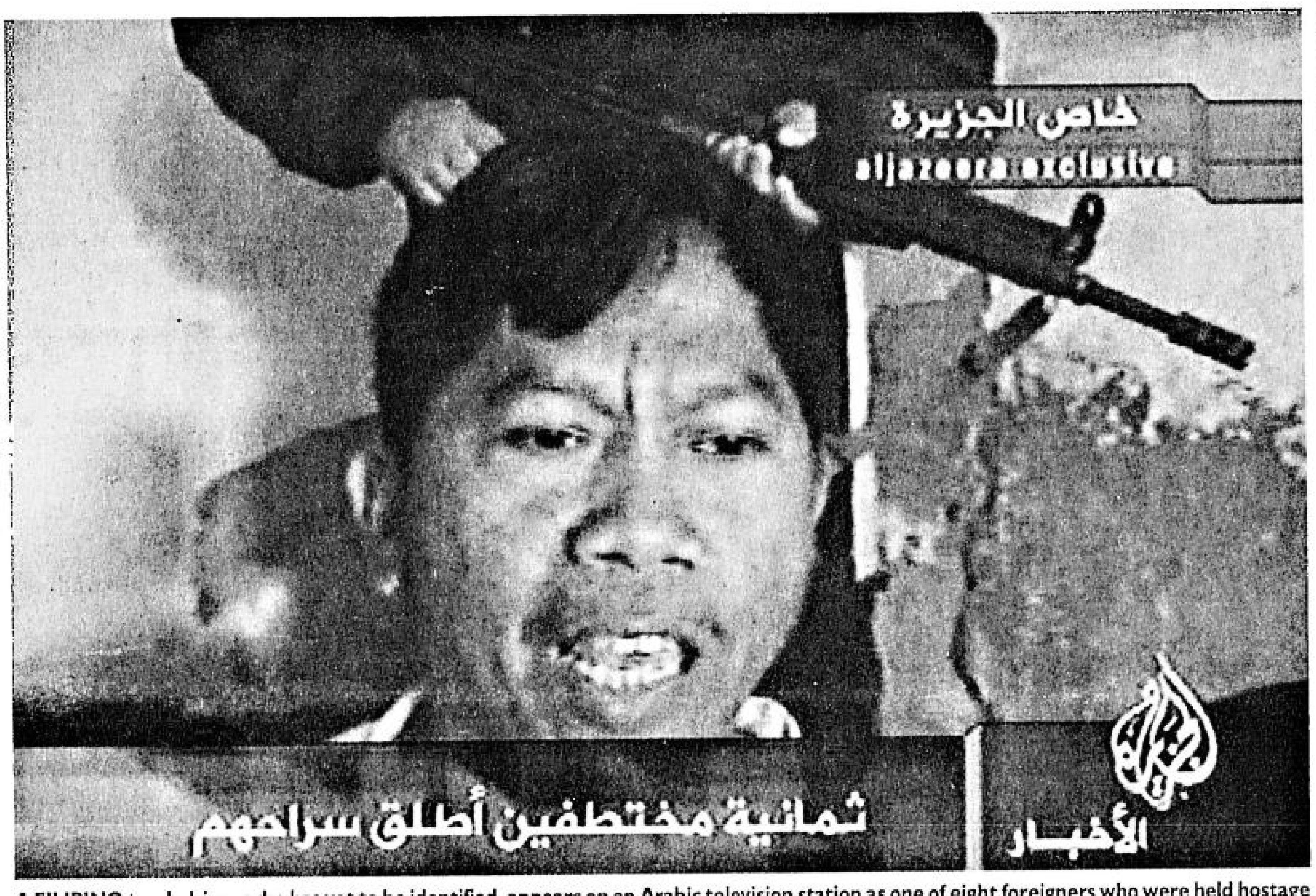
Former Education Secretary Raul Roco was third with 12 percent, followed by Panfilo Lacson with 10 percent. Bro. Eddie Villanueva was at the bottom with 3 percent.

In the vice presidential race, Sen. Noli de Castro, Ms Macapagal's running mate, continued to lead, getting 49 percent. Sen. Loren Legarda, Poe's running mate, obtained 35 percent.

The respondents were asked to write down on a ballot the names of their chosen candidates, simulating actual voting procedures.

"Interestingly, 10 percent of Filipino voters are unable or refuse to say who their presidential bet is ..., slightly higher than the proportion of the electorate expressing the same sentiment in

GMA NOW/ A16



A FILIPINO truck driver, who has yet to be identified, appears on an Arabic television station as one of eight foreigners who were held hostage in Iraq. A masked man later said on videotape that the hostages had been released. REUTERS/AL JAZEERA

Filipino among foreign hostages in Iraq

By Jerome Aning and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

NERVOUSLY, he mumbled the words "Philippines" when he was shown on Arab television along with other hostages held by hooded Iraqi gunmen.

No one in the Department of Foreign Affairs knows his name but the unidentified Filipino truck driver, abducted along with at least seven other men by armed groups fighting US-led coalition forces in Iraq, has been released.

He was one of dozens of foreigners taken hostage the past week by insurgents in Iraq demanding the pullout of coalition troops.

In a videotape aired by Arabic television station Al Jazeera on Sunday, a masked man announced the release of the eight foreign men described as truck drivers who had supplied "the forces of the enemy," Reuters reported.

"We have released them in response to a call from the Muslim Clerics Association ... after we were sure that they will not deal with the occupation forces again," the man said.

FILIPINO/ A6

Rebs seize mayor for not paying election fee

By Marlon Ramos, Madonna T. Virola and Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

A GROUP of 30 heavily armed communist guerrillas abducted the mayor and vice mayor of Pola, Oriental Mindoro, and 11 other people on Sunday after they reportedly refused to pay the "permit-to-campaign" fee demanded by the rebels, police said yesterday.

Mayor Alex Aranas was released unharmed along with nine others some three hours after they were seized by New People's Army (NPA) guerrillas while campaigning in a mountainous part of Barangay Campamento in Pola town.

Vice Mayor Arturo Martinez and an aide, who had been taken an hour earlier while putting up campaign posters nearby, were among those released.

A police report said the rebels were still holding on to Aranas' three bodyguards—Army Privates Michael R. Rapadas and Rommel S. Javier, and Police Officer Ronald S. Reanzares.

Chief Supt. Alejandro Lapinid, police director of Mimaropa (Mindoro-Marinduque-Romblon-Palawan), said the police and the military had launched an "all-out operation" to rescue the captives after negotiations between Aranas and the rebels broke down.

In a phone interview with the INQUIRER, Aranas related that he and his 10 companions were heading back to Barangay Campamento on board two vans when they were blocked by a group of men with high-powered arms.

Aranas said he had just come back from a campaign sortie and an inspection of a project of Sen. Noli de Castro's in the village. Pola is the hometown of De Castro, who is running for vice president in the administration coalition.

He said the rebels positioned themselves along the dirt road and were evidently waiting for

REBS/ A16

Don't let Abu escapees leave Basilan, GMA orders

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Christian Esguerra

CORDON off Basilan, if necessary, and hunt them down.

Saying this was no time for blame-tossing, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday ordered a massive manhunt for 25 inmates—10 of them Abu Sayyaf bandits—still at large after a bloody breakout by dozens of detainees from the Basilan provincial jail.

"If the massive manhunt requires cordoning off the whole Basilan province to prevent the escapees from fleeing to other provinces, so be it," the President said in a statement.

She said the Abu Sayyaf fugitives posed a threat not only to the witnesses against them in court, including the wives of the hostages the brutal group had beheaded, but to the whole Basilan community.

"Let us stop the blame-tossing and finger-pointing and mop up this problem soonest," Ms Macapagal said. "Let us get the fugitives first and resolve the issue of accountability later."

Col. Raymundo Ferrer, Army brigade commander, said in Isabela City that the military had already "established a sea blockade to ensure that the fugitives will not slip out of the province." He did not say how many boats were involved in the operation to cordon off the tadpole-shaped island with an area of 1,370 sq. km.

The military said earlier it had warned Basilan jail officials of a plot by the Abu Sayyaf suspects to escape, and told them to reinforce prison security.

The Black Saturday breakout has become a political embarrassment for Ms Macapagal less than a month before the May 10 presidential election, with latest polls showing her either enjoying a

DON'T LET/ A16

Angara stays on in FPJ coalition, slams Lacson for 'bullying ways'

By Carlito Pablo, Norman Bordadora and Michael Lim Ubac

SEN. EDGARDO Angara is staying on in Fernando Poe Jr.'s Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, according to Sorsogon Rep. Francis Escudero, Poe's campaign spokesperson.

Escudero made the statement early yesterday, amid talk that Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson, the other opposition presidential candidate, wanted Angara out of the KNP if unity negotiations were to succeed. *(See related story on Page A2.)*

"He (Angara) is part of the KNP," Escudero said. "Unless there are indications otherwise, he's helping."

Lacson confirmed yesterday at a press conference in Maasin, Iloilo, that he and Poe had a one-on-one meeting on Easter Sunday. He said Angara's removal from the KNP was only a suggestion and not a demand for unification talks to continue.

Asked if he had discussed Angara's ouster with Poe, Lacson said: "No, we didn't discuss it, but it came out in our conversation. We identified the problem not only within the LDP (Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino). We could see that Senator Angara is the problem of the KNP as well."

He added: "Any negotiation will be for naught if Angara stays in their camp. This, I think, they also appreciate."

But in a phone call made to the INQUIRER early last night, Angara said Lacson was "delusional" for "concocting a wild tale" about his possible unification with Poe's camp.

"The way he's behaving ... his bullying ways ... he is making what he calls unification impossible," Angara said of Lacson.

Angara declared that no one could force him out of the KNP because, "I was the one who

ANGARA/ A16

SUMMER DIP JM GUIAO PUNZALAN

Golden boys of summer, like this tourist, enjoy the cool waters of White Island to escape the scorching April sun. This beach bum's haunt is a deserted sandbar in Mambajao, Camiguin.

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Second FRONT PAGE

'Full court press' for FPJ

RELIGION AND ELECTION

SC tackles church endorsement

By Philip C. Tubeza

DO RELIGIOUS leaders commit a crime when they endorse politicians during elections?

The Supreme Court will hear today in Baguio City oral arguments on whether this is a violation of the Constitutional provision on the separation of church and state.

SC Clerk of Court Luzviminda Puno yesterday described the case that necessitated today's proceedings as "crucial." Mike Velarde, head of the influential Catholic charismatic group El Shaddai is seeking to reverse a Manila court decision that declared said endorsements as unconstitutional.

On June 27, 2003, Manila Judge Concepcion S. Alarcon-Vergara ruled that the head of a religious organization, who "influences or threatens to punish" members, could be held liable for coercion and violation of a citizen's right to vote freely.

Velarde challenged the ruling because he said it was against the Constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion.

The original case was filed by the Social Justice Society (SJS) party in January 2003 against Velarde, former Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin, Iglesia ni Cristo Executive Minister Erano Manalo, Ang Dating Daan head Bro. Eli Soriano and evangelical leader and presidential candidate Bro. Eddie Villanueva.

Lawyers for the churchmen are expected today at the Session Hall in the SC compound in Baguio, where the magistrates are holding their regular summer session. The oral arguments are set to start at 11 a.m.

Lawyer Samson Alcantara, head of the SJS (now known as the Advocates and Adherents of Social Justice for School Teachers and Allied Workers), said he was confident that the SC would uphold the Manila court's ruling.

Manalo's INC practices bloc voting. Sin was instrumental in rallying support for the assumption to power of former President Corazon Aquino and incumbent President Macapagal-Arroyo. El Shaddai supported Joseph Estrada in the last presidential elections, allowing him to win handily.

GMA camp not yet giving up on El Shaddai

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo's camp yesterday refused to concede that it had "lost" the support of the influential El Shaddai charismatic group following reports that its leader, Bro. Mike Velarde, had personally brokered a unifying truce between opposition presidential bets Fernando Poe Jr. and Sen. Panfilo Lacson.

"Bro. Mike is for Gloria. I was a personal witness to their discussion," said presidential campaign spokesperson Michael Defensor, in a phone interview with the INQUIRER.

Defensor claimed that during El Shaddai's Palm Sunday service on April 3, Velarde had told the President: "Steady *ka lang. Kaya yan* (You can make it)."

Defensor said Velarde and the President exchanged notes on the conduct of her campaign during a lull in the celebration.

Defensor said Velarde was not only giving the President advice on how to run her campaign, he was also giving her "moral support" to continue her programs. He said Velarde was well aware of the President's competence, having given her counsel over the last two years.

Defensor said that until Bro. Mike openly endorses a presidential candidate (similar to his backing of Joseph Estrada in the 1998 polls), the touted "voting bloc" of the El Shaddai group remained up for grabs.

"The stories coming out are just intrigues hoping [to] drive a wedge between the President and Bro. Mike," Defensor said.

Aside from Velarde's alleged facilitation of unification talks between Poe and Lacson last Sunday afternoon, Bishop Teodoro Bacani virtually promoted the candidacy of Poe in his homily during the El Shaddai Easter Mass.

Bacani called on the El Shaddai faithful to "vote for change" and to choose "Christ over Judas" in the elections.

Bishop's warning was against FPJ, Lakas solon says

THE WARNING made by Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales that a popular vote does not always mean a responsible choice was a clear signal for the electorate to reject actor Fernando Poe Jr. in the May presidential election, according to Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay.

Rosales told the voters last Saturday that they should not be deceived by popularity but for good traits in choosing the country's next president.

"To my mind, Archbishop Rosales' statement was a clear signal for the people not to elect Poe for the good of the country," he said.

Pichay said that Rosales was right in his observation that Poe has nothing to offer except entertainment value. "Poe's campaign is as empty as his promises to the people. People show up on his sorties because of the entertainment offered by his camp and nothing else. *Cynthia D. Balana*

Binay, Sotto to split work as KNP campaign managers

By Carlito Pablo

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As an "additional hand," Binay would be "giving inputs," Escudero said, clarifying that the the inputs would be "political" in nature.

Escudero declined to comment categorically on the statement given Sunday by KNP media bureau chief Rod Reyes, who confirmed that Binay had been designated "overall campaign manager."

Speaking on dzBB radio, Reyes said Poe's campaign had previously been run by a committee of senior advisors but that now it needed someone to take charge.

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He dismissed as black propaganda reports that the mayor had replaced him. "This is the start of the full court press," he told the INQUIRER. "That's why we're fortifying the (campaign) team."

There was no such thing as an overall campaign manager in their camp, Sotto said, junking Reyes' announcement. He added that Binay was joining a campaign management team that already included himself and Senators Tessie Aquino-Oreta and Gregorio Honasan. "Mayor Binay has always been the KNP's chair for the National Capital Region but he is now taking a more active role."

"After all is said and done, titles do not really matter. I am willing to give up any title just as long as we achieve our goal, and that is to make FPJ the next president," Sotto said.

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"*Walang replacement at walang tinanggal* (No replacements or terminations took place)," Binay said also in a phone interview. He took another swipe at the media bureau chief by saying that only Poe had the authority to announce movements in the party's executive committee.

Like Sotto, the mayor also pointed out that the party had no such thing as an "overall" or "general" campaign manager. "We are all campaign managers," he said, "even Senator Sotto."

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Lito Anzures, Binay's own spokesperson, did say, however, that KNP campaign managers had been "asked to work double time." Henceforth, his boss would have to be absent "every once in a while" from his own reelection campaign rallies, Anzures said. The residents of Makati would understand and even be proud of their mayor's "important role" in the KNP, he was sure, describing the city as "Fernando Poe Jr. country."

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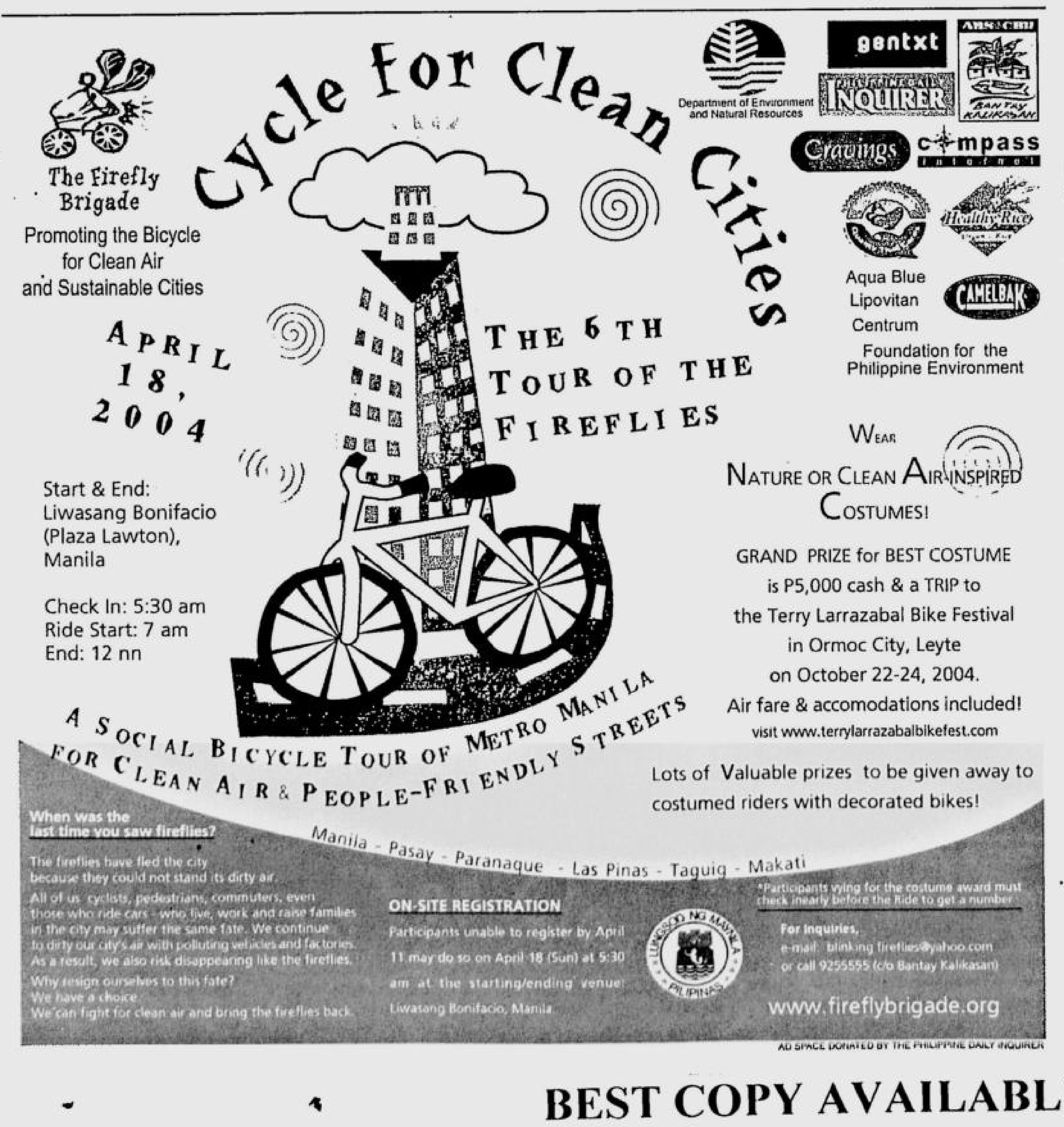
RP safe from 'Cosme'

TYPHOON Cosme is expected to keep a considerably harmless distance from the archipelago and is expected to bring no more than cloudy skies and isolated rains over eastern Luzon.

As of last night, the weather bureau charted Cosme over the Pacific Ocean, 920 km east southeast of Casiguran, Aurora.

Packing 175 kph winds near the center and gustiness of up 210 kph to near the center, the typhoon was moving north northwest at 11 kph toward Japan.



Cycle for Clean Cities
The Firefly Brigade
Promoting the Bicycle for Clean Air and Sustainable Cities
APRIL 18, 2004
THE 6TH TOUR OF THE FIREFLIES
A SOCIAL BICYCLE TOUR OF METRO MANILA FOR CLEAN AIR & PEOPLE-FRIENDLY STREETS
Manila - Pasay - Paranaque - Las Pinas - Taguig - Makati
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
gentxt
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
ABS-CBN
BANTAY KALIKASAN
Cravings
compass
Healthy Rice
CAMELBAK
LUNGSOD NG MAYNILA PILIPINAS

Start & End:
Liwasang Bonifacio
(Plaza Lawton),
Manila

Check In: 5:30 am
Ride Start: 7 am
End: 12 nn

Aqua Blue
Lipovitan
Centrum
Foundation for the Philippine Environment

WEAR NATURE OR CLEAN AIR-INSPIRED COSTUMES!

GRAND PRIZE for BEST COSTUME is P5,000 cash & a TRIP to the Terry Larrazabal Bike Festival in Ormoc City, Leyte on October 22-24, 2004.
Air fare & accomodations included!
visit www.terrylarrazabalbikefest.com

Lots of Valuable prizes to be given away to costumed riders with decorated bikes!

When was the last time you saw fireflies?

The fireflies have fled the city because they could not stand its dirty air.
All of us cyclists, pedestrians, commuters, even those who ride cars - who live, work and raise families in the city may suffer the same fate. We continue to dirty our city's air with polluting vehicles and factories. As a result, we also risk disappearing like the fireflies.
Why resign ourselves to this fate?
We have a choice.
We can fight for clean air and bring the fireflies back.

ON-SITE REGISTRATION
Participants unable to register by April 11 may do so on April 18 (Sun) at 5:30 am at the starting/ending venue: Liwasang Bonifacio, Manila.

*Participants vying for the costume award must check in early before the Ride to get a number

For Inquiries,
e-mail: blinking fireflies@yahoo.com
or call 9255555 (c/o Bantay Kalikasan)

www.fireflybrigade.org

AD SPACE DONATED BY THE PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

11,000 absentee Pinoys cast votes

By Jerome Aning and Martin P. Marfil

MORE than 11,000 land-based Filipinos working overseas cast their ballots on Sunday, the first day of absentee voting, the Department of Foreign Affairs yesterday reported.

Foreign Secretary Delia Albert described the first day of voting as "very encouraging and marked by a high degree of enthusiasm and a strong sense of civic duty."

She said the number of voters—3.5 percent of the total number of overseas votes—represents "a good start" and expects more people to vote in the next four weeks.

Albert said the conduct of voting was peaceful, well-organized and well-coordinated. She attributed this to the DFA and Commission on Election's "careful planning and preparation."

The DFA's Overseas Absentee Voting Secretariat continues to receive updates on the conduct of the voting from 81 Philippine embassies and consulates, three Manila Economic & Cultural Offices in Taiwan and as well as overseas labor centers in the Middle East and Asia-Pacific.

In view of the wide geographic distribution of overseas Filipinos, Comelec allowed field and satellite voting in 14 areas.

Diplomatic posts, however, have been barred by the Comelec from disclosing voter turnouts in polling centers under their jurisdiction.

OAVS deputy chair Catherine Maceda earlier said this was meant to deter political parties from the practice of *hakot*, or gathering voters and giving them free transport to precincts and snacks in exchange for votes.

Hong Kong had the biggest turnout with 4,566 voters who took advantage of their rest day to cast their ballots, Comelec reported. There are close to 90,000 registered voters in this area.

Cable station ANC reported late yesterday afternoon that more than 2,000 Filipinos cast their votes in polling centers in the Gulf region, particularly in Saudi Arabia, where there are more than 96,800 voters.

The DFA said Filipino nurse Bernadette Estuita cast the first absentee ballot at the Philippine embassy in Wellington, New Zealand, which was four hours ahead of Manila time.

Estuita, a native of Marikina City, works at the Riverleigh Retirement Home and Hospital in Lower Hut, New Zealand. She was at the head of the line when the Philippine embassy opened its doors at 9 a.m., New Zealand time.

The oldest voter last Sunday was 98-year-old Toribia Lopez, a native of Biñan, Laguna, who cast her ballot at the Philippine consulate general in Agana, Guam. Christopher van Opstal, 18, a student of media and journalism at the University of Technology Sydney was the youngest.

Van Opstal, who cast his vote at the Philippine consulate general in Sydney, said he felt a strong sense of history after casting his vote.

"I believe that by this act, I am answering the call of our national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, to be the fair hope of our Inang Bayan," the Sydney consulate quoted him as saying. *With a report from AFP*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

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E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Second **FRONT PAGE**

'Full court press' for FPJ

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The Supreme Court will hear today in Baguio City oral arguments on whether this is a violation of the Constitutional provision on the separation of church and state.

SC Clerk of Court Luzviminda Puno yesterday described the case that necessitated today's proceedings as "crucial." Mike Velarde, head of the influential Catholic charismatic group El Shaddai is seeking to reverse a Manila court decision that declared said endorsements as unconstitutional.

On June 27, 2003, Manila Judge Concepcion S. Alarcon-Vergara ruled that the head of a religious organization, who "influences or threatens to punish" members, could be held liable for coercion and violation of a citizen's right to vote freely.

Velarde challenged the ruling because he said it was against the Constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion.

The original case was filed by the Social Justice Society (SJS) party in January 2003 against Velarde, former Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin, Iglesia ni Cristo Executive Minister Erano Manalo, Ang Dating Daan head Bro. Eli Soriano and evangelical leader and presidential candidate Bro. Eddie Villanueva.

Lawyers for the churchmen are expected today at the Session Hall in the SC compound in Baguio, where the magistrates are holding their regular summer session. The oral arguments are set to start at 11 a.m.

Lawyer Samson Alcantara, head of the SJS (now known as the Advocates and Adherents of Social Justice for School Teachers and Allied Workers), said he was confident that the SC would uphold the Manila court's ruling.

Manalo's INC practices bloc voting. Sin was instrumental in rallying support for the assumption to power of former President Corazon Aquino and incumbent President Macapagal-Arroyo. El Shaddai supported Joseph Estrada in the last presidential elections, allowing him to win handily.

GMA camp not yet giving up on El Shaddai

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo's camp yesterday refused to concede that it had "lost" the support of the influential El Shaddai charismatic group following reports that its leader, Bro. Mike Velarde, had personally brokered a unifying truce between opposition presidential bets Fernando Poe Jr. and Sen. Panfilo Lacson.

"Bro. Mike is for Gloria. I was a personal witness to their discussion," said presidential campaign spokesperson Michael Defensor, in a phone interview with the INQUIRER.

Defensor claimed that during El Shaddai's Palm Sunday service on April 3, Velarde had told the President: "Steady *ka lang. Kaya yan*(You can make it)."

Defensor said Velarde and the President exchanged notes on the conduct of her campaign during a lull in the celebration.

Defensor said Velarde was not only giving the President advice on how to run her campaign, he was also giving her "moral support" to continue her programs. He said Velarde was well aware of the President's competence, having given her counsel over the last two years.

Defensor said that until Bro. Mike openly endorses a presidential candidate (similar to his backing of Joseph Estrada in the 1998 polls), the touted "voting bloc" of the El Shaddai group remained up for grabs.

"The stories coming out are just intrigues hoping [to] drive a wedge between the President and Bro. Mike," Defensor said.

Aside from Velarde's alleged facilitation of unification talks between Poe and Lacson last Sunday afternoon, Bishop Teodoro Bacani virtually promoted the candidacy of Poe in his homily during the El Shaddai Easter Mass.

Bacani called on the El Shaddai faithful to "vote for change" and to choose "Christ over Judas" in the elections.

Bishop's warning was against FPJ, Lakas solon says

THE WARNING made by Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales that a popular vote does not always mean a responsible choice was a clear signal for the electorate to reject actor Fernando Poe Jr. in the May presidential election, according to Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay.

Rosales told the voters last Saturday that they should not be deceived by popularity but for good traits in choosing the country's next president.

"To my mind, Archbishop Rosales' statement was a clear signal for the people not to elect Poe for the good of the country," he said.

Pichay said that Rosales was right in his observation that Poe has nothing to offer except entertainment value. "Poe's campaign is as empty as his promises to the people. People show up on his sorties because of the entertainment offered by his camp and nothing else. *Cynthia D. Balana*

RP safe from 'Cosme'

TYPHOON Cosme is expected to keep a considerably harmless distance from the archipelago and is expected to bring no more than cloudy skies and isolated rains over eastern Luzon.

As of last night, the weather bureau charted Cosme over the Pacific Ocean, 920 km east southeast of Casiguran, Aurora.

Packing 175 kph winds near the center and gustiness of up 210 kph to near the center, the typhoon was moving north northwest at 11 kph toward Japan.

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11,000 absentee Pinoys cast votes

By Jerome Aning and Martin P. Marfil

MORE than 11,000 land-based Filipinos working overseas cast their ballots on Sunday, the first day of absentee voting, the Department of Foreign Affairs yesterday reported.

Foreign Secretary Delia Albert described the first day of voting as "very encouraging and marked by a high degree of enthusiasm and a strong sense of civic duty."

She said the number of voters—3.5 percent of the total number of overseas votes—represents "a good start" and expects more people to vote in the next four weeks.

Albert said the conduct of voting was peaceful, well-organized and well-coordinated. She attributed this to the DFA and Commission on Election's "careful planning and preparation."

The DFA's Overseas Absentee Voting Secretariat continues to receive updates on the conduct of the voting from 81 Philippine embassies and consulates, three Manila Economic & Cultural Offices in Taiwan and as well as overseas labor centers in the Middle East and Asia-Pacific.

In view of the wide geographic distribution of overseas Filipinos, Comelec allowed field and satellite voting in 14 areas.

Diplomatic posts, however, have been barred by the Comelec from disclosing voter turnouts in polling centers under their jurisdiction.

OAVS deputy chair Catherine Maceda earlier said this was meant to deter political parties from the practice of *hakot*, or gathering voters and giving them free transport to precincts and snacks in exchange for votes.

Hong Kong had the biggest turnout with 4,566 voters who took advantage of their rest day to cast their ballots, Comelec reported. There are close to 90,000 registered voters in this area.

Cable station ANC reported late yesterday afternoon that more than 2,000 Filipinos cast their votes in polling centers in the Gulf region, particularly in Saudi Arabia, where there are more than 96,800 voters.

The DFA said Filipino nurse Bernadette Estuita cast the first absentee ballot at the Philippine embassy in Wellington, New Zealand, which was four hours ahead of Manila time.

Estuita, a native of Marikina City, works at the Riverleigh Retirement Home and Hospital in Lower Hut, New Zealand. She was at the head of the line when the Philippine embassy opened its doors at 9 a.m., New Zealand time.

The oldest voter last Sunday was 98-year-old Toribia Lopez, a native of Biñan, Laguna, who cast her ballot at the Philippine consulate general in Agana, Guam. Christopher van Opstal, 18, a student of media and journalism at the University of Technology Sydney was the youngest.

Van Opstal, who cast his vote at the Philippine consulate general in Sydney, said he felt a strong sense of history after casting his vote.

"I believe that by this act, I am answering the call of our national hero, Dr.Jose Rizal, to be the fair hope of our Inang Bayan," the Sydney consulate quoted him as saying. *With a report from AFP*

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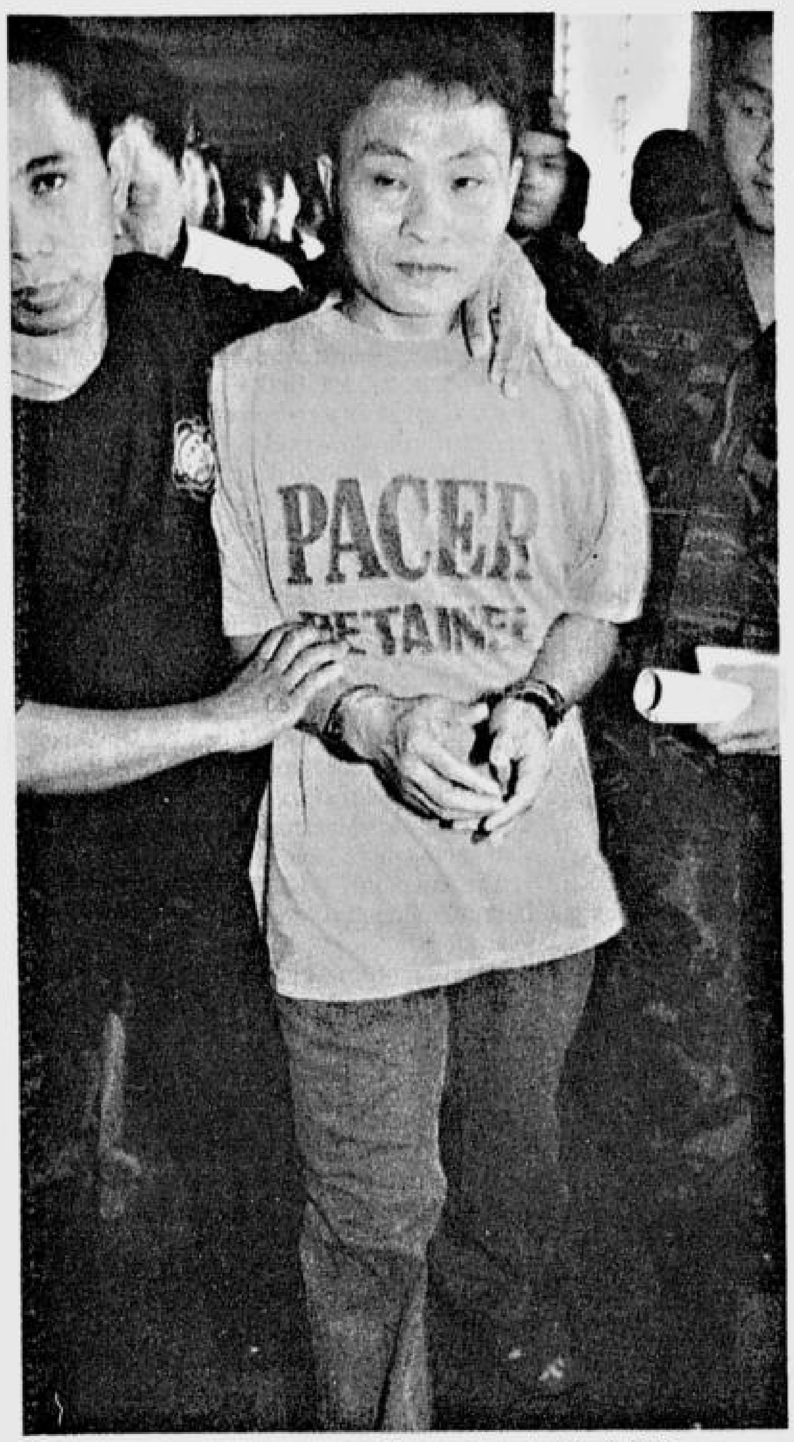
Top LRT blast suspect ordered transferred



TIGHT GUARDING: Yunos escorted by guards to the Manila RTC. ERIK ARAZAS

By Tarra Quismundo

THE MAN who stands trial for the December 2000 bombing of the Light Rail Transit would soon be joining members of the Abu Sayyaf Group and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front who are in detention in Bicutan.

Muklis Hadji Yunos, the only one among the 11 charged for the Rizal Day bombing, would be relocated to Camp Bagong Diwa in Bicutan, Taguig.

Yesterday, the court granted the motion of state prosecutor Peter Ong to transfer the suspect, who is in the custody of the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response (Pacer) in Camp Crame, Quezon City, to Bicutan.

Yunos and his lawyer Fidel Macauyag, have no problem with the transfer, said Ong in an interview after the suspect's re-arraignment at the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 29, a family court.

Yunos would be in the custody of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, sharing the same detention facility of Abu Sayyaf leader Ghalib Andang, also known as Commander Robot.

The motion came following the escape of 53 detainees and 24 ASG members from a Basilan provincial jail. Ong, however, said he had no doubts about the security at Camp Crame. But after consulting with the National Bureau of Investigation and the PNP Intelligence Group, the prosecution thought it best to transfer Yunos for his own safety.

"Besides, his detention at (Camp) Crame is temporary. He should have been detained at the city jail—Bicutan is part of city jail," explained Ong.

Yunos was brought to Camp Crame, the national headquarters of the Philippine National Police, after he was arrested in Cagayan de Oro in May 25 last year.

His fellow accused, Indonesian bomb expert Fathur Rohman al-Ghozi, escaped detention at the PNP Intelligence Group detention cell in Camp Crame, with alleged Abu Sayyaf members Abdulmukim Edris and Omar Opik Lasal on July 14, 2003. The rest of the accused in the Rizal Day bombing are at large.

In June 2002, Pentagon kidnap-for-ransom gang leader Faizal Marohombsar and kidnapping suspects Abdul Macaumpang and Rodolfo Patinio also escaped detention at Camp Crame.

Both Al-Ghozi and Marohombsar were later killed in pursuit operations of the police and the military.

At yesterday's re-arraignment at Judge Cielito Grulla's sala, Yunos was secured by three custodians and two PNP Special Action Forces (SAF) members.

The Maranaw native again refused to enter a plea to the charges of multiple murder, multiple frustrated murder, and multiple attempted murder.

He entered a guilty plea when he was first arraigned in July 8 last year. But he changed his mind saying that he did not fully understand what he was being asked when he entered his plea.

The court, abiding by procedure, entered a plea of not guilty in his behalf.

The media were not allowed inside the family court, where the case was tried for the first time yesterday since its transfer from a special criminal court. Yunos was the first of the 30 cases that Grulla heard yesterday in her jampacked courtroom.

Ong had requested the re-raffle of the case, as minors were among the 12 killed and 19 injured in the LRT bombing. He said that he only acquired the birth certificates of the minors involved only last September.

The pre-trial is set on June 14, when the prosecution and the defense would agree on the witnesses and documents that they would present in court.

2 DQ cases tackled today

By Martin P. Marfil

THE COMMISSION on Elections will tackle two disqualification cases against President Macapagal-Arroyo today.

One of the cases, filed by broadcaster Mel Chavez, will be resolved by the second division while the other, filed by the group called Pro-Con(nstitution), has been scheduled for hearing by the Comelec's first division.

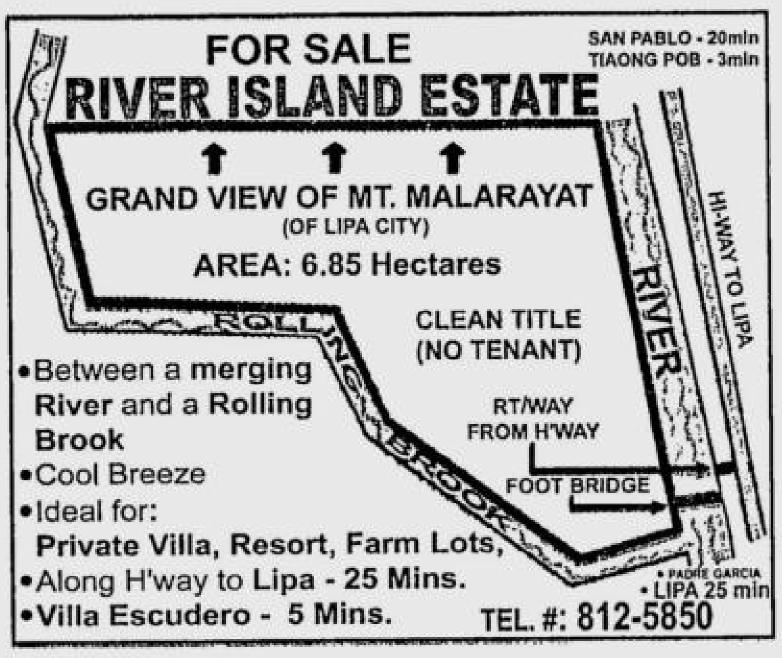
Chavez, who had filed one of the earliest disqualification cases, is seeking the disqualification of Ms Macapagal's certificate of candidacy alleging that the document was not properly filed.

According to Chavez, Ms Macapagal had the document sworn before an Assistant City Prosecutor, an official whom the broadcaster described as one who lacked the authority to do so.

This act, Chavez alleged, rendered the document a "mere scrap of paper."

The promulgation of the Chavez case has been set for 10 a.m. today.

The second case—scheduled for hearing also at 10 a.m.—was filed by lawyer Jose Vicente Salzar of Pro-Con, who is seeking the disqualification of Ms Macapagal because she had allegedly exceeded the allowed 120 minutes of television advertising allotted for each candidate.



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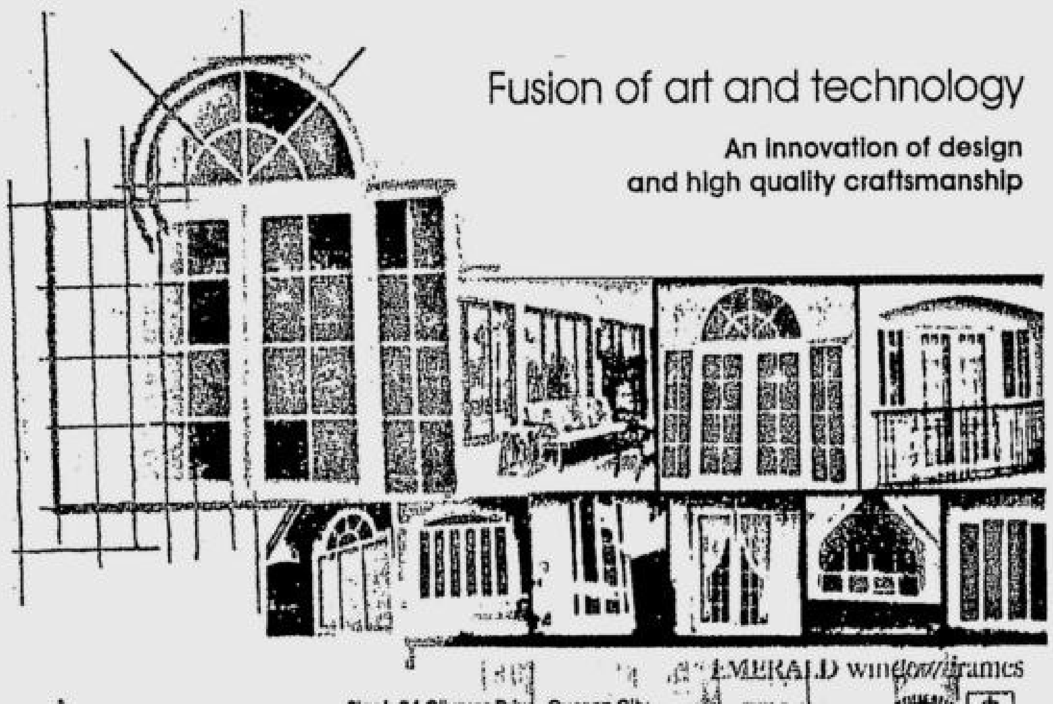

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human rights lawyer handling cases on violence against women

Yasmin Busran-Lao
Muslim woman advocate for peace and development in Mindanao

La Rainne Abad-Sarmiento
Former Barangay Captain and expert on local governance

Kala Pulido-Constantino
Exec. Dir. of Kalakasan NGO doing work on violence against women and women's health issues.

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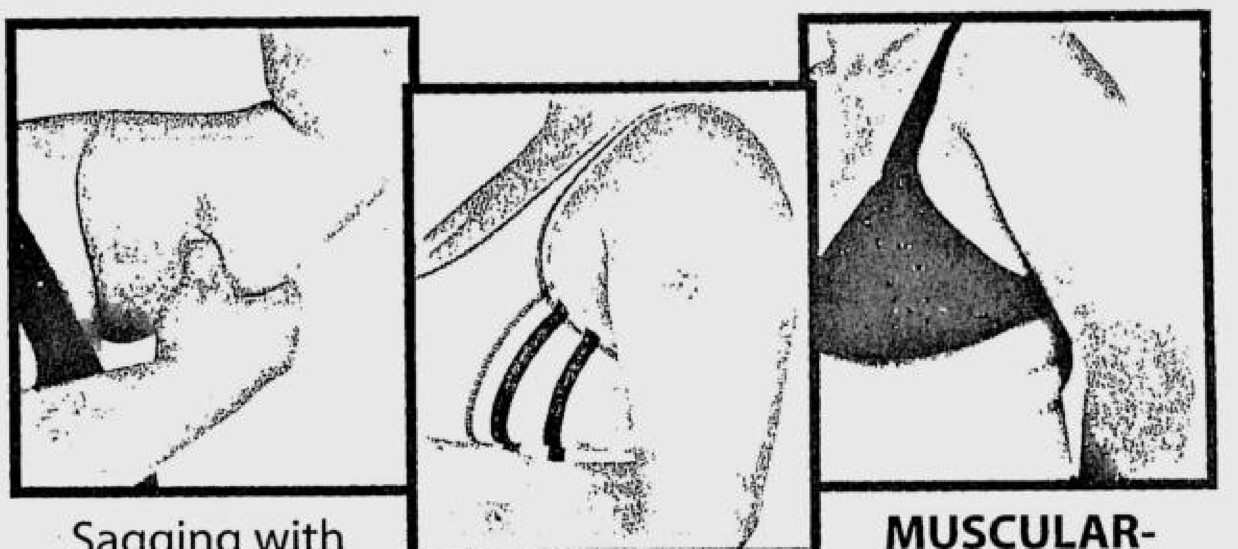

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Mike, Chiz: Friends from rival campaigns

From page A1

spokespersons for President Macapagal-Arroyo and Fernando Poe Jr., respectively, are not pitching brickbats at each other.

Mike describes Chiz as "very competent," and Chiz says simply: "We're friends."

Still, their differences are striking.

As members of the 11th Congress, Mike was with the "Spice Boys," who played a prominent role in the impeachment of President Joseph Estrada in 2000, and Chiz was with the "Bright Boys," the pro-Estrada group.

Tarlac Rep. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III, a friend to both, pointed out fundamental ideological differences in the two products of the University of the Philippines.

"Mike is an activist; the evils of martial law were very clear to him," said Noynoy. As for Chiz, *"nakatali sa tatay niya* (he's tied to his father)."

Chiz's father is Salvador "Sonny" Escudero, a former official of the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos and now senatorial candidate of Poe's Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino.

According to Noynoy, Mike was more able to get involved in issues during the Estrada administration—*"sakay nang sakay sa issue"*—while Chiz had to keep quiet because he was on Estrada's side.

"Mike is a lot freer to choose his own destiny," Noynoy said, adding:

"Chiz is more precise, being a lawyer, while Mike is emotional. But when they are committed to something, they will stick to it."

'Good vs evil'

Mike also heads the administration's K-4 sorties group, which decides where the President and the rest of her slate are to campaign.

Defensor said that after he was given the job of campaign spokesperson last Dec. 1, more than two months before the national campaign period began, he expected the opposition to follow suit. He said Chiz was a logical choice.

"Chiz is very competent," Mike said. "He's very eloquent and articulate but as the saying goes, in a fight between good and evil, good will always triumph. It's not so much that I have an advantage over Chiz [as that] in my and in many people's perception, I am on the good side."

Asked how he saw himself standing pound for pound against Mike, Chiz said: "Why are you making us fight when we're friends?

"Perhaps the difference between us is that I've spent more time in school compared to him," Chiz said. "Mike, of course, has greater experience in politics because he started early."

At 34, Mike is the youngest spokesperson for Ms Macapagal.

On Jan. 25, 2001, a few days after she was sworn in as President, Mike was named chair of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (from which he is on leave). He was only 31 then, apparently the youngest Cabinet member in recent history.

Before then, he was a two-term congressman of the third district of Quezon City. He was the youngest member of the House during his first term in 1995. His political career began with a stint in the Quezon City council in 1992, when he was only 22.

At the UP where he obtained a bachelor's degree in history in 1991 and a master's degree in public administration in 1999, Mike served as vice chair of the Student Council. He was also national chair of the National Union of Students of the Philippines.

In 1999, Asiaweek magazine named him one of Asia's Political Leaders of the New Millennium. He was counted among the "new breed of politicians and activists" who were expected to break out of traditional politics and infuse the system with dynamism.

No slouch

But Chiz, a UP student since kindergarten and a debater during his college days, is no slouch in the credentials department.

He acquired a law degree in 1993 and was a member of the Order of the Purple Feather, an honor society in the UP College of Law. In between his studies, he was a teaching assistant at the UP Department of Political Science.

He also acquired a master's degree in international law and comparative law from Georgetown University in Washington, completing it between 1995 and 1996.

Before going to Georgetown, he was an associate at the Bautista, Picazo, Buyco, Tan & Fider Law Office, and a legal counsel at the UP College of Law.

To round off his education, Chiz took some general staff course units care of the Armed Forces. He was given the rank of commander in the Philippine Navy Reserve Command in 2000.

Chiz was first elected congressman of the first district of Sorsogon in 1998.

Currently, he is a partner at the Escudero, Marasigan, Vallente & Villareal Law Office. As host of the radio program "Usapang de Campanilla" over dzMM since 2003, he can easily switch from impeccable English to flawless Filipino.

Now on his second term in the House, Chiz is also spokesperson of the country's second largest political party, the Nationalist People's Coalition of business tycoon Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco.

He is seeking a third term. The talk in the House is that if Poe wins, Chiz is a cinch as Speaker, the youngest in the history of the Philippine Congress.

He makes her laugh

Mike is supposedly one of only two Cabinet members who could make the President laugh (the other was said to be Raul Roco, now standard-bearer of the Alyansa ng Pag-Asa, when he was still education secretary).

On a recent campaign trip, Ms Macapagal was shouting at Mike for her hectic schedule that barely gave her time to prepare her speech. Five minutes to land, she was still in a foul mood.

Anxious about the crowd waiting to greet her at the airport, Mike told her: "Madam President, we're about to land. Think of your granddaughter Mikaela."

Ms Macapagal laughed and replied: "I'll just think of you."

According to Mike's fellow Cabinet members, he can ease the tension when the going gets rough.

One such official recalled that one of the "major gloomy days" was when Roco angrily resigned last year as education secretary upon learning that the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission was investigating him for a graft case filed by an employees union in his department.

The source said they did not know how to explain the resignation of Roco, who had started saying negative things about the President.

"It was a very ticklish situation and everyone was saddened by it. There was a lull during the Cabinet meeting and no one could speak," the source said.

And then Mike supposedly said: "Madam President, can we just say that all Cabinet secretaries who had sat beside [then Public Works] Secretary [Simeon] Datumanong had quit?"

It was not a real solution to the problem, but it made Ms Macapagal and the rest of the Cabinet laugh, the source said.

The assembly started ribbing Datumanong because then Transportation Secretary Pantaleon Alvarez, Vice President and then Foreign Secretary Teofisto Guingona Jr. and now Roco had all sat beside him in the state dining room before they resigned.

Diehard fan

Chiz is a diehard fan of Poe who swears to having watched nearly all of the actor's movies, whether on the wide screen, on tape and in TV reruns.

He said that back in 1999 when he was to marry his wife Christine Elizabeth, he and other congressmen were in Malacañang to see then President Estrada.

Recalled Chiz: "My fellow congressmen had folders in hand for projects in their respective districts for Erap's approval. But I had only one request: For me to talk to FPJ so I could get him as one of my wedding sponsors."

He said Estrada laughed, spoke with Poe on the phone, and suddenly passed the phone to him.

"I was surprised and I didn't know what to call him," said Chiz, who had yet to meet the actor then. "The first words that came out of my mouth were: 'Hello, idol! Good afternoon. Can you be one of my wedding sponsors?'"

Estrada guaranteed to Chiz that Poe would come to the wedding. Indeed, when the presidential limousine drove up to the church, Estrada disembarked from the right side and Poe from the left.

"And that was the first time I met FPJ," Chiz said.

"I shook his hand and I noticed it was bandaged. I asked him what happened and he said he had come from a movie shooting and the horse he was riding made a sudden spurt.

"He tried to stop it, but his hand got burned by the reins."

Near-Spartan lifestyle

When idol and fan met for the second time in February 2004, Poe had an offer: for Chiz to serve as his campaign spokesperson.

"He said he has watched me and liked what he saw—calm, cool, not easily provoked," Chiz said. "It didn't take much convincing because, first, my father is running under [the KNP] and second, from the start, *sa kanya naman pinakamagaan ang loob ko* (it was him to whom I was most drawn)."

The discussions took all of three days at Poe's residence in Greenhills, San Juan.

"[It was] free-flowing," Chiz said. "I asked all the questions I wanted to ask. I wanted to see where he was coming from, what he thinks about a lot of things."

Chiz said what struck him during those meetings was the Poes' almost Spartan lifestyle.

"You can't see any newly bought accessory in his house. Glasses, kitchen ware, tables and chairs, hot water bottle, vase, paintings—all are old. He's a millionaire many times over and he can surely buy new things if he wants to.

"He bought his Greenhills house perhaps during the 1960s and the one in Antipolo in the 1970s. In other words, they're content with what they have, and they don't flaunt what they have earned in the entertainment industry.

"For me, that's a very important trait for one aspiring for leadership. *Walang kati sa kamay* (No itch for more). Because the most difficult situation is to give power to a person who is ravenous and wants to get more and more.

"FPJ is happy with what he has. That's how he is before he entered politics. So I have great confidence that when he becomes president, his administration will be clean. He will do what's best for the country, for the greater majority."

More of a manager

Mike is constantly focused on the job at hand, trying to make reporters understand Ms Macapagal and get her message across.

"The President is more of a manager than a politician," he said. "She's high-strung; the decibel of her voice can really go high when things are not done efficiently. But when she's mad at someone, she's not belittling that person but ... the act."

He said the "destabilization plots" against the President in the past three years had also put undue pressure on her.

"She deserves to let off her chest some of the anger and the frustrations, but she is a very, very kind person," he said. "She really feels for the poor, but her way of showing it is not by warming up to a person but looking into how she can really change the life of that person in terms of programs."

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April 17 & May 8, 2004
For additional information, please write or call:

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Proposal to regulate college tuition shelved

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

TERTIARY-LEVEL students and their parents will have to dig deeper into their pockets this year.

This after education officials shelved plans to regulate fee increases by colleges and universities until next year.

With just two months before the next school opening, the Commission on Higher Education has yet to come up with its promised stricter guidelines on school fee hikes.

"It will not be implemented this year but next school year," said CHEd executive director Julito Vitriolo yesterday.

Vitriolo said this was because many schools had already set their fee increases for the coming school year, after having competed their "consultations" with their students by Feb. 28.

Under the present guidelines, school owners have to "consult" with their students before hiking tuition.

"It will be unfair to the schools (to change the rules now) since they had complied with the old rules," Vitriolo said.

Consultations are not required in the case of miscellaneous fee hikes.

In February, CHEd chair Bro. Rolando Dizon FSC announced that the agency would regulate school fee increases beginning this school year.

Dizon said many colleges and universities had abused the tuition deregulation policy which has been in place the past 22 years.

He said CHEd would come up with the new guidelines in March in time for the June school opening. But Dizon is currently on medical leave.

In an interview yesterday, Vitriolo said that schools would find it "very difficult" to comply with any new guidelines at this time.

"We have to be prospective, not retroactive," he said.

He said the decision to postpone implementation of the new guidelines was arrived at on April 2 during a consultation with school and student groups.

Nevertheless, CHEd would come up with the new guidelines within the month, Vitriolo promised.

Dizon had said that schools would have to get the approval of their students, parents and CHEd if they raised fees beyond the inflation rate.

But Vitriolo said CHEd's approval may no longer be necessary.

He said the proposed guidelines would allow inflation-based fee increases.

If the fee increases are higher than the inflation rate, the school owners would then have to consult with their students.

"But when (the increase) is greater, there should be approval (by CHEd)," Vitriolo said.

CANCER KIDS

Cancer victims Tawni Indiana and Renante Navarro are cheered by hairdresser Ricky Reyes, Luli Macapagal Arroyo and a clown at the Munting Paraiso Cancer Institute of the University of the Philippines-Philippine General Hospital during the celebration of Reyes' birthday Monday. Reyes, who had adopted the center as his favorite charity, marks his birthday by donating medicines and gifts to some 500 children afflicted with cancer. The President's daughter is his special guest.

Free acquitted detainees, Davide orders

By Philip C. Tubeza

NO MAN shall serve more than his time.

Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. has ordered all trial court judges throughout the country to immediately cause the release of detainees whose cases had been dismissed by the courts or who had been acquitted of the charges they faced.

In a memorandum order dated April 2, Davide said that despite their acquittal or the dismissal of their cases, a number of persons remained "detained for days, if not weeks or even months," due to delays in the processing and delivery of their release orders to the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP).

"Now, therefore, all trial judges are directed to be ready with an Order of Release on the date set for promulgation of a decision," Davide said in his memo.

His directive also covered accused persons who had been under detention for a period equal to or greater than the maximum prison term for the crime they face in court.

Davide said release orders should be signed as soon as an accused is acquitted or the charges against him dismissed.

He said trial court judges should immediately direct the court sheriff or process server to give a copy of the release order to the BJMP officer escorting the prisoner.

"The escort shall be under strict orders to deliver the release order to the jail warden who, in turn, shall immediately enforce it subject to verification if the prisoner has other cases," Davide said.

Exec raises alert vs JI terrorists

By Jeffrey M. Tupas
PDI Mindanao Bureau

KIDAPAWAN CITY—A special prosecutor on anti-terrorism from the Department of Justice (DOJ) was in Mindanao last week to inform local leaders on the presence of the Al-Qaida-linked Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) cells in key cities in the region.

North Cotabato Gov. Emmanuel Pinol said yesterday that the DOJ representative recently alerted officials from the cities of Kidapawan, Koronadal, Cotabato and General Santos on the movement of JI elements, a group of highly trained terrorists largely based in neighboring Indonesia.

According to Pinol, the justice department suspected that those behind the October 2002 bombing in Kidapawan that killed a number of people and wounded many others, were members of JI. He said there was a possibility that other bombings in other cities were perpetuated by the terrorists.

"We have always been on alert for possible JI activities," Pinol said, adding that local officials were bracing for terror plots "given the fact that JI is operating in Kidapawan as monitored by the Department of Justice."

Gunmen kidnap 3 men off Sabah

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia—Armed men dressed in military fatigues kidnapped at least three people off a boat in Malaysian waters near the southern Philippines, a newspaper reported here Monday.

Gunmen on speed boats attacked a tugboat pulling a barge loaded with sand to a port in the Borneo island state of Sabah, taking two Malaysians and at least one other crew member but leaving behind others, who alerted authorities, The Star newspaper reported on its Web site.

Details of the attack were sketchy and Sabah police refused to comment, the paper said. Officials in Kuala Lumpur weren't immediately available to comment.

In the Philippines, Navy spokesman Commander Geronimo Malabanan said Malaysian army officials in Sabah had notified the Navy that three people, including the owner of the boat, were abducted in the incident late Sunday near Bakungan island in Malaysia. He had no further details.

Kidnap raids in Sabah have occurred several times in recent years, and were blamed on rebel groups in the southern Philippines, including the al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf terrorist group.

More recently, Abu Sayyaf bandits seized five Indonesians and five Filipinos from a Sabah resort in October 2003. Officials refused to pay ransom and their fate is unknown although they are believed being held in Tawi-Tawi. *AP*

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Filipino among foreign hostages …

From page A1

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AFP assurance

"Our troops in Iraq are okay," he said. "There has been some fighting in their sector, the central sector of the multinational division headed by the Polish contingent. That's about 20 km from Al-Hila where our troops are. They are continuing with their humanitarian work."

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He said there were now 49 members of the Philippine contingent, including 41 from the AFP and eight from the Philippine National Police.

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"They have been flown in to replace the elements who had been rotated and that includes several medical elements coming from the armed forces since the Department of Health personnel are not going back," Garcia said. "So they have been replaced by medical personnel from the armed forces."

Malacañang in quandary

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In a 20-page report, the panel dismissed for lack of merit Mauricio's two complaints for graft and plunder, which he filed on March 23 and 26, and his subsequent motion to stop the government takeover of Maynilad from Benpres.

Cleared along with the President were acting Justice Secretary Merceditas Gutierrez and Government Corporate Counsel Manuel Teehankee, who lawyers for the state-owned Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS).

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The fact-finding report, signed by Deputy Ombudsman for Luzon Victor Fernandez, virtually gave Mauricio a lecture in law:

"It is basic and elementary that the President of the Philippines can only be removed by impeachment on grounds enumerated by the Constitution and not by way of a criminal complaint," Fernandez said.

As to the motion to stop the takeover, the antigraft body took a hands-off stance, noting that the Regional Trial Court of Quezon City was already hearing the firm's rehabilitation plan that had been agreed upon between Maynilad and the government, represented by the MWSS.

Acting on the motion at this point would be "premature" and "encroach upon the judicial powers of the court," the report said.

"(Maynilad's) institution of the petition for rehabilitation with the court tied our hands on the matter," the probe team said.

Mauricio, a senatorial candidate under Alyansa ng Pag-Asa, had accused Malacañang of "giving unwarranted benefit" to Maynilad and causing undue injury to the government in terms of uncollected revenues.

He also asked the Office of the Ombudsman to order the release of public documents relating to the amended concession agreement between Maynilad and MWSS, claiming that government agencies concerned "refused to provide" him copies.

The report pointed out that he failed to give specifics on this allegation.

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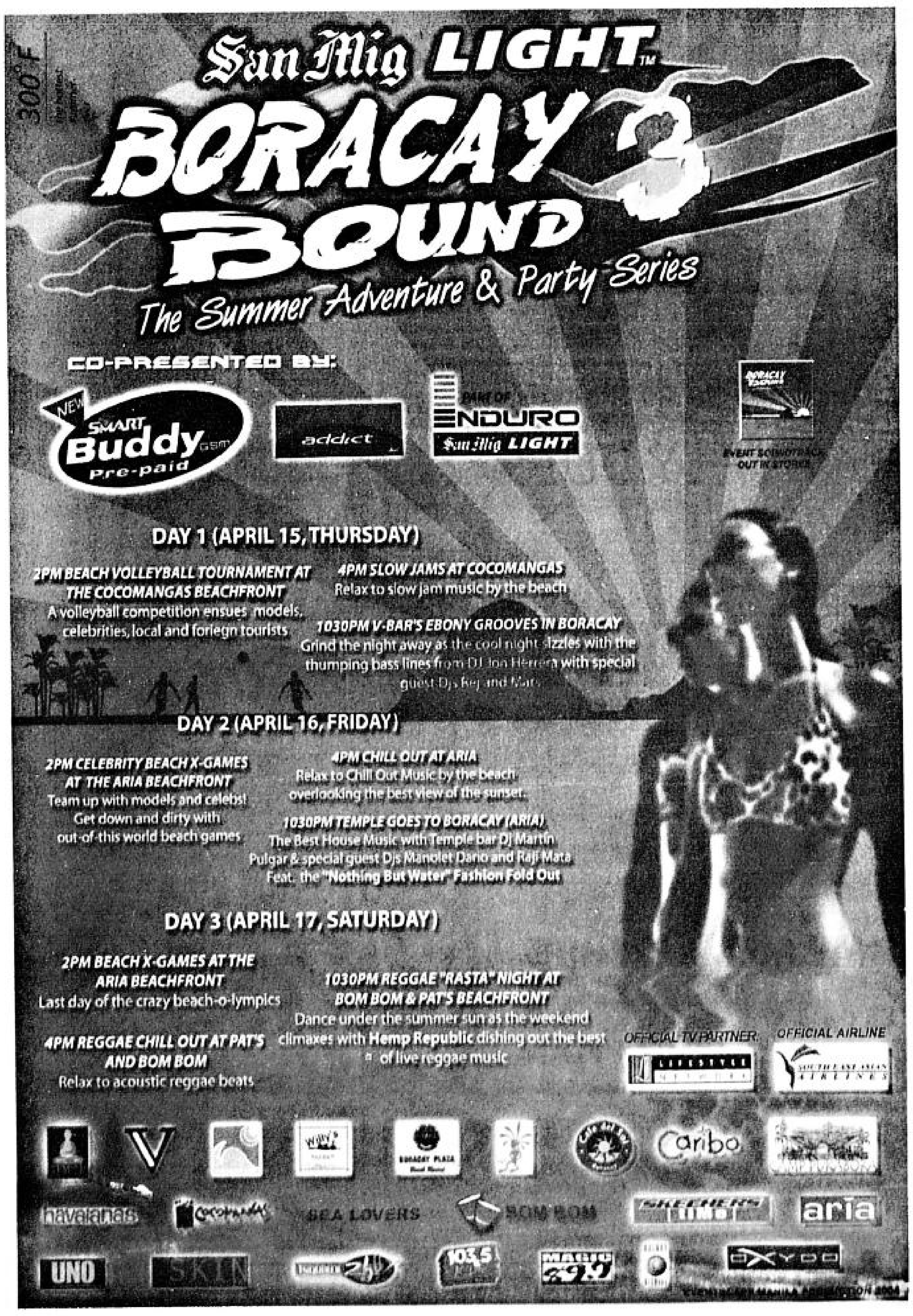

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1030PM V-BAR'S EBONY GROOVES IN BORACAY
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DAY 2 (APRIL 16, FRIDAY)
2PM CELEBRITY BEACH X-GAMES AT THE ARIA BEACHFRONT
Team up with models and celebs! Get down and dirty with out-of-this world beach games
4PM CHILL OUT AT ARIA
Relax to Chill Out Music by the beach overlooking the best view of the sunset.
1030PM TEMPLE GOES TO BORACAY (ARIA)
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DAY 3 (APRIL 17, SATURDAY)
2PM BEACH X-GAMES AT THE ARIA BEACHFRONT
Last day of the crazy beach-o-lympics
4PM REGGAE CHILL OUT AT PAT'S AND BOM BOM
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From page A1

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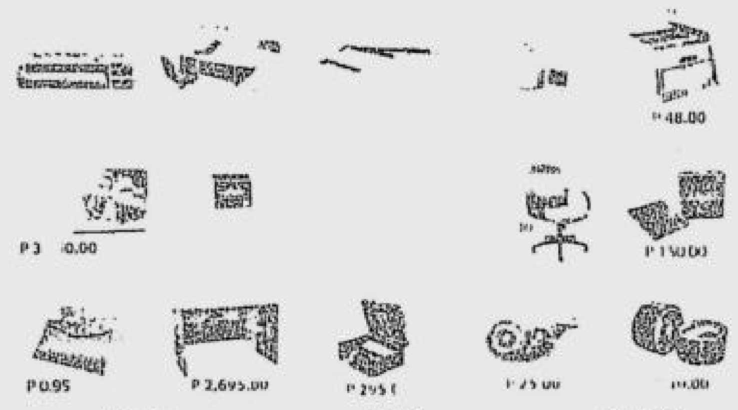

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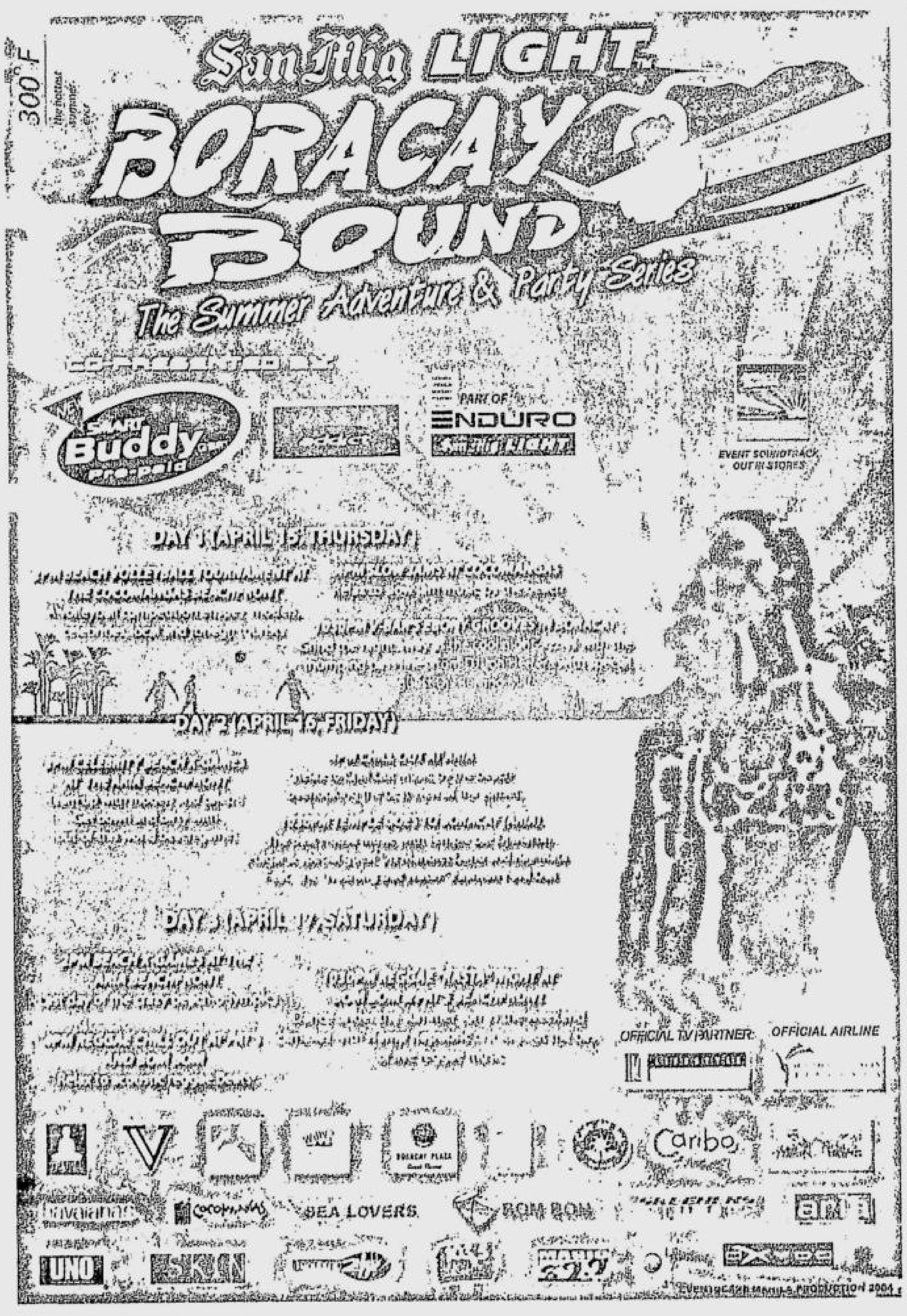

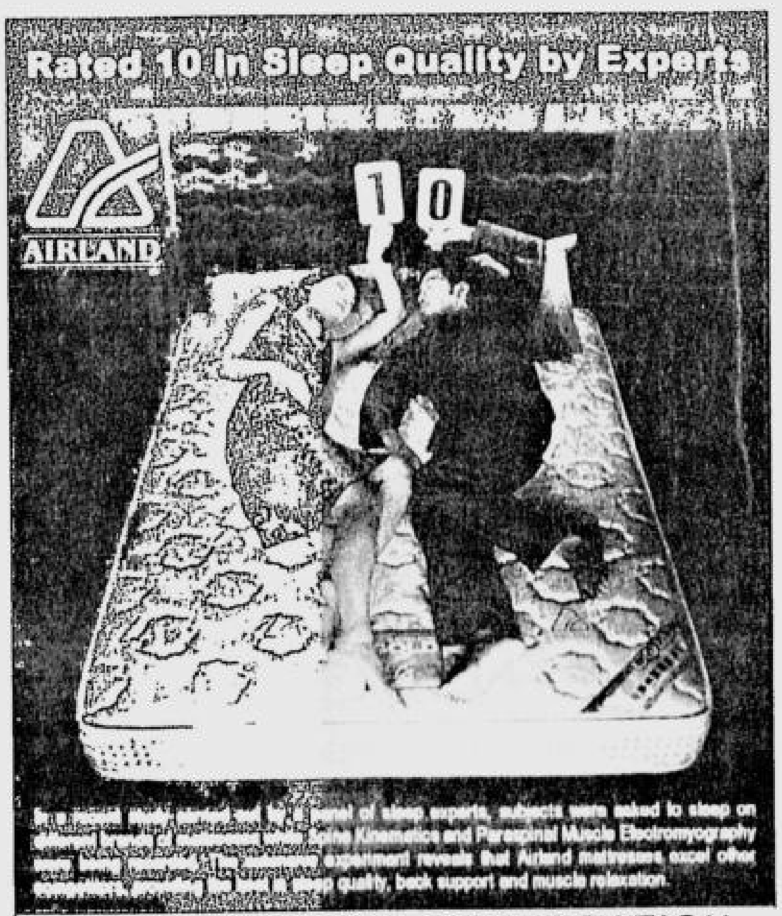
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'Let VPs debate'

By Michael Lim Ubac

IF THE protagonists won't do it, then their seconds should step in.

So said vice presidential candidate Herminio Aquino yesterday as he challenged his rivals Sen. Noli de Castro and Sen. Loren Legarda to show up for the presidential debate today sponsored by the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV).

Speaking during a campaign break in Makati City, Aquino said De Castro and Legarda should take up the cudgels for President Macapagal-Arroyo and Fernando Poe Jr., respectively, by agreeing to a vice presidential debate.

The President declined to participate in the debate after Poe said he was not going to.

"Then all the more the VP debates become more important (because otherwise) we're hoodwinking the voters. We're just deluding them with self-serving propaganda by not (allowing) them to see for themselves who the candidates are," Aquino said.

The PPCRV debate will be held at 6 p.m. at the Westin Philippine Plaza.

Defections hit Roco camp, says Palace

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

WHILE RAUL Roco has denied he was withdrawing from the presidential race, Malacañang yesterday said his "core group" of supporters had met with President Macapagal-Arroyo on April 2 and switched their allegiance to her.

"A big group that used to support Senator Roco came to Malacañang and expressed the sentiment that based on national interest, they were shifting their support to the President," said presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye in a radio interview.

Later in a phone interview, Bunye said the group, which he described as a "core group" of Roco supporters, met with the President two Fridays ago to pledge their support for her candidacy.

Asked if this meant reports that Roco was withdrawing from the race were true, Bunye said: "We cannot confirm that. All we can say is that people (around Roco) reassessed his situation and felt that this move (defection) was well-advised."

But a Palace official told the INQUIRER over the weekend that "it was just a matter of time" before Roco withdrew his candidacy.

ROCO

"Given the political condition of his organization and the defections, I think it's only a matter of time before he (withdraws)," said the official, who asked not to be named.

Gabriel Claudio, the President's campaign manager, would not confirm reports that Roco had agreed to withdraw in favor of Ms Macapagal.

But Claudio said Roco's key political leaders and strategists had left him and were now with Ms Macapagal.

Claudio identified them as Rep. Jose Bengzon, former Representatives Gualberto Lumauig, Rodolfo Tingzon, Luz Bakunawa, Venice Agana and Jerome Paras, and former presidential adviser Emil Ong.

Tingzon even hosted the President during her campaign swing through Laguna on Sunday.

Malacañang said Pedro Reyes Jr., chair of the Raul Roco Movement, had also defected to the administration side.

Bulacan Rep. Willie Villarama, formerly with Roco's Aksyon Demokratiko, said Roco would be committing a "heroic act" if he withdrew from the race.

"I think it will be a heroic act on his part to sacrifice (his personal ambition) to prevent the (election) of an undergraduate with no experience in government, said Villarama, apparently referring to Ms Macapagal's strongest rival, actor Fernando Poe Jr.

No truth to rumors, Roco insists

By TJ Burgonio, Blanche S. Rivera, Michael Lim Ubac

THE USUALLY upbeat, tireless Raul Roco yesterday opted not to join his party's campaign sortie in Makati City, their first after the Holy Week break, to prepare for tonight's televised presidential debate, as he brushed off persistent rumors that he was engaged in unity talks with another presidential candidate, Eddie Villanueva.

"There's no truth to the rumors," the Alyansa ng Pag-asa bet told reporters after an assessment meeting with his ticket at his Quezon City home on Easter Sunday. "There are no negotiations happening. Nobody has called or talked to me."

Bangon Pilipinas standard bearer Eddie Villanueva yesterday also denied talks about a coalition with Roco.

Villanueva's spokesperson Luis Sison and Bangon party president Honesto Isleta said they knew of no meeting between the two presidential aspirants.

Sison stressed that if there was such a negotiation, it would prosper only if Villanueva would not be required to slide down.

"I do not think Bro. Eddie will coalesce with anybody," Isleta said, recalling how Villanueva often said that he "would push through with his presidential bid, win or lose."

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Group wants Meralco probed for 'illegal' hike

By Abigail L. Ho

BEFORE resuming hearings on Manila Electric Co.'s rate hike application, the Energy Regulatory Commission should first look into some of the firm's possible illegal acts, a consumer watchdog said.

The People Opposed to Warrantless Electricity Rates (POWER) said resuming the hearings would only pave the way for a possible power rate hike of 12 centavos per kilowatt-hour (kWh), something that the Supreme Court stopped almost three months ago.

POWER officer Renato Reyes Jr. said in a statement yesterday that if the hearings take place before the May elections, it could again be used as an election issue and even give the Meralco's Lopez family some leverage because of its ties with the administration.

"This is indeed the season of compromises. We have yet to see an end to compromises and horse-trading under this administration. It seems that the wheeling and dealings are far from over," he said.

Reyes was referring to the fact that a former mainstay of the Lopez-owned ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp., Sen. Noli de Castro, is President Macapagal-Arroyo's running mate.

He said the ERC could be compelled to grant Meralco's rate hike petition just so the government could keep its end of the bargain in its alleged "quid pro quo" agreement with the Lopezes. But both the Lopezes and the tandem of Macapagal and De Castro have denied any quid pro quo in the decision of De Castro to run as running mate of Ms Macapagal.

ERC chair Rodolfo Albano Jr. said in a telephone interview yesterday that the hearings were not likely to take place before May 10 as most of the stakeholders had not agreed on a common schedule when they could all appear before the Commission.

'The ERC is ready for the hearing. The parties involved are being consulted on their availability. We're after their availability," he explained.

Meralco's implementation

Reyes said that instead of resuming the hearings, the ERC should just investigate Meralco's December implementation of the 12-centavo rate hike when it was supposed to take effect only in January.

The ERC in November last year granted Meralco a 12-centavo rate adjustment, short of the 13.58-centavo increase that the Lopez-led firm sought.

But the Supreme Court in January stopped the collection of the increases through a temporary restraining order on the ERC's provisional authority granting the rate hike.

Meralco, according to Reyes, had implemented the 12-centavo increase in December, a month before the ERC-issued provisional authority was supposed to take place.

He added that the law-mandated 30-centavo Power Act Reduction that electricity consumers were supposed to enjoy had gone down to only 13.73 centavos per kWh in the April billing.

The Electric Power Industry Reform Act mandates distribution utilities to give a discount of 30 centavos per kWh for electricity purchased from state-run National Power Corp.

Consumers told to brace for new power rate hikes

POWER consumers should brace for higher electric bills as government and independent power producers and distributors lay the groundwork for a series of rate increases after the May elections.

This warning came from former Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile in light of a recent announcement by Energy Secretary Vincent Perez that rate increases were inevitable.

Enrile, who is running for senator under the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, called on consumers to be vigilant in protecting their rights to quell fresh plans for a new round of price increases and "sweetheart deals" among power industry players.

"We must put an end to all the abusive, questionable and onerous malpractices in the power industry," said Enrile.

Enrile said Perez had no choice but to tell the truth after government failed to address the problems of the power sector in the past three years, including amendments to the provisions of the Electric Power Industry Rehabilitation Act of 2001 (Epira).

Power crisis

Enrile also criticized what he described as "scare" scenario of a crippling power crisis in three to four years being peddled by Federico "Piqui" Lopez, whose family controls the Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) and owns a number of power generating plants.

Lopez had earlier warned of possible severe power outages in the coming years unless the government reforms the energy sector to attract potential investors.

Perez, however, denied this scenario, calling it "imaginary."

Among the "sweetheart deals" consumers should watch out for, Enrile said, include the completion of transmission lines which stand to benefit the Lopez IPP and the reactivation of the mothballed plants at the the 600MW Sucat Power complex.

"We should welcome investments in the power sector and allow for fair and decent profits," Enrile said. "However, the vigilance to protect consumers from being gouged and from abusive practices by interrelated utilities shall continue."

Enrile, founding chairman of Philippine Consumer Watch, vowed to continue his fight for revisions in the EPIRA to encourage competition, increase safeguards for consumers, strengthen regulation and reduce losses of government from the Napocor privatization.

SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

POLITICAL LAW (ELECTORAL LAW)—**Determination of the will of electorate**—in an election case, it is the primary duty of the Comelec and the courts to ascertain by all means the will of the electorate. Thus, when the Comelec treated respondent's petition as one for correction of manifest errors, it was merely complying with its duty. Petitioner has put premium on technicalities over and above such noble duty. In Duremdes vs Comelec, G.R. Nos. 86362-63, October 27, 1989, 178 SCRA 746, the court held that the determination of the true will of the electorate should be paramount, thus: "Election contests involve public interest. Technicalities and procedural barriers should not be allowed to stand if they constitute an obstacle to the determination of the true will of the electorate in the choice of their elective officials ... Laws (and rules) governing election contests must be liberally construed to the end that the will of the people in the choice of public officials may not be defeated by mere technical objections. In an election case, the court has an imperative duty to ascertain by all means within its command who is the real candidate elected by the electorate." Instead of dismissing the petition for purely technical reasons, the Comelec correctly considered the merits thereof. [Citations omitted.] [En Banc, Justice Sandoval-Gutierrez, Dela Llana vs Commission on Elections, G.R. No. 152080. November 28, 2003]

BY R. B. VERA

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, April 13, 2004
Octave of Easter

1st Reading:	Acts 2:36-41
Gospel:	Jn 20:11-18

Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she bent down to look inside; she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head, and the other at the feet. They said, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She answered, "Because they have taken my Lord and I don't know where they have put him."

As she said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not recognize him. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?" She thought it was the gardener and answered him, "Lord, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and remove him."

Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him, "Rabboni"—which means, Master. Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me; you see I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them: I am ascending to my Father, who is your Father, to my God, who is your God."

So Mary of Magdala went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord, and this is what he said to me."

Commentary

A frequent literary device in John's gospel is the use of gradual recognition, or misunderstanding as a stage on the path to understanding: see for example, the conversations Jesus had with Nicodemus (ch. 3), the Samaritan woman (ch. 4), etc. In today's passage we find it once again: Mary thought at first that Jesus was the gardener. The moment of full recognition was when he spoke her name. This has a great deal of resonance throughout the Scriptures, from beginning to end. "The Lord said to Moses, 'I am pleased with you and I know you by name'" (Ex 33:17). Referring to himself, Jesus said, "The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep ... The sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out" (Jn 10:2-3). A faith that does not go to the depth of one's personal existence is not faith but theory. Even theology is not faith: a person may know a great deal of theology but have no faith. I heard a woman describe her husband, "He's very interested in religion, but he has no faith." Conversely, a person may know little about religion but have profound faith. St. Thomas Aquinas said that one old lady (una vetera) may have more faith than a host of learned theologians.

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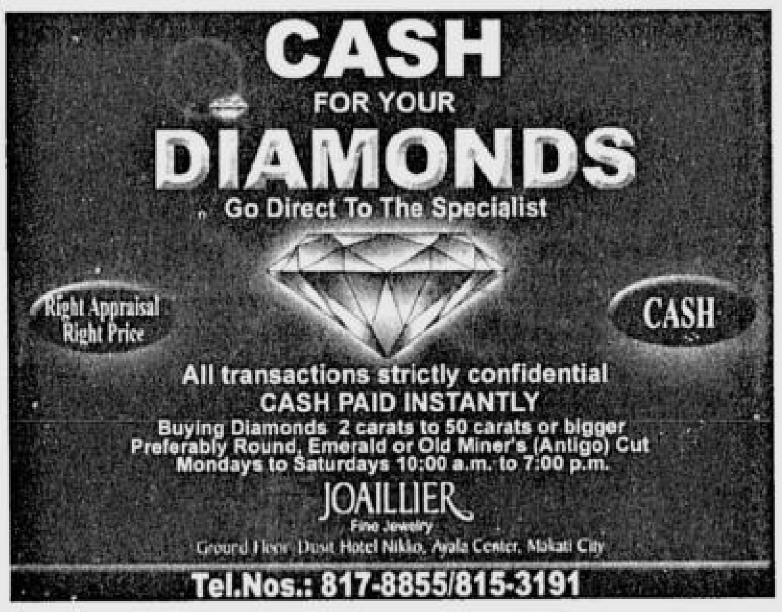

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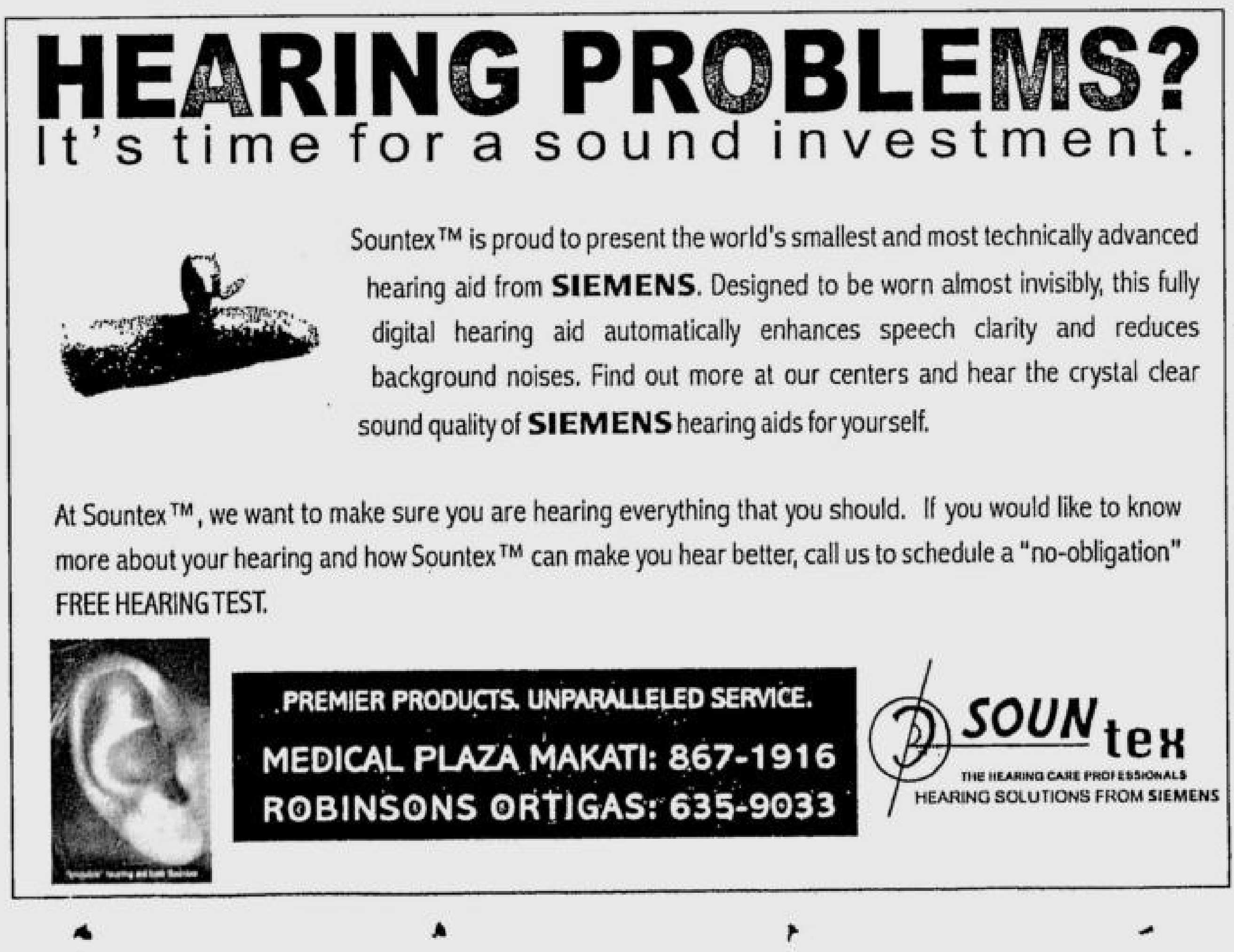

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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

600 Iraqis killed in week of fierce fighting in Iraq

FALLUJAH, Iraq—Civilians fled Fallujah on Sunday when a truce halted a week of fierce fighting between US forces and Sunni Muslim guerrillas in which more than 600 Iraqis had been killed.

A British contractor seized by suspected guerrillas six days ago was freed, raising hopes for other foreign hostages still being held. An unidentified negotiator told Japan three kidnapped Japanese civilians were safe, Kyodo news agency said.

The US military said eight soldiers had been killed by guerrillas in the past 48 hours. Guerrillas also shot down a US Apache helicopter near Baghdad airport, killing the crew.

Some 60 US and allied troops have died in the past week in Iraq's bloodiest and most chaotic period since the fall of Saddam Hussein a year ago.

"It was a tough week," President George W. Bush said at Fort Hood, Texas, where he prayed with US troops on Easter Sunday.

"I pray every day there are less casualties, but I know what we are doing in Iraq is right, right for long-term peace, right for the security of our country," said Bush, seeking reelection in November with Iraq high on the agenda.

"This violence we've seen is part of a few people trying to stop progress toward democracy," he said, sticking to his declared policy of handing power back to Iraqis on June 30 despite critics suggesting he faces a Vietnam-style quagmire.

US-led forces were pitched into a new front last week against radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's Mehdi Army militia as well as a long-running battle with Sunni guerrillas.

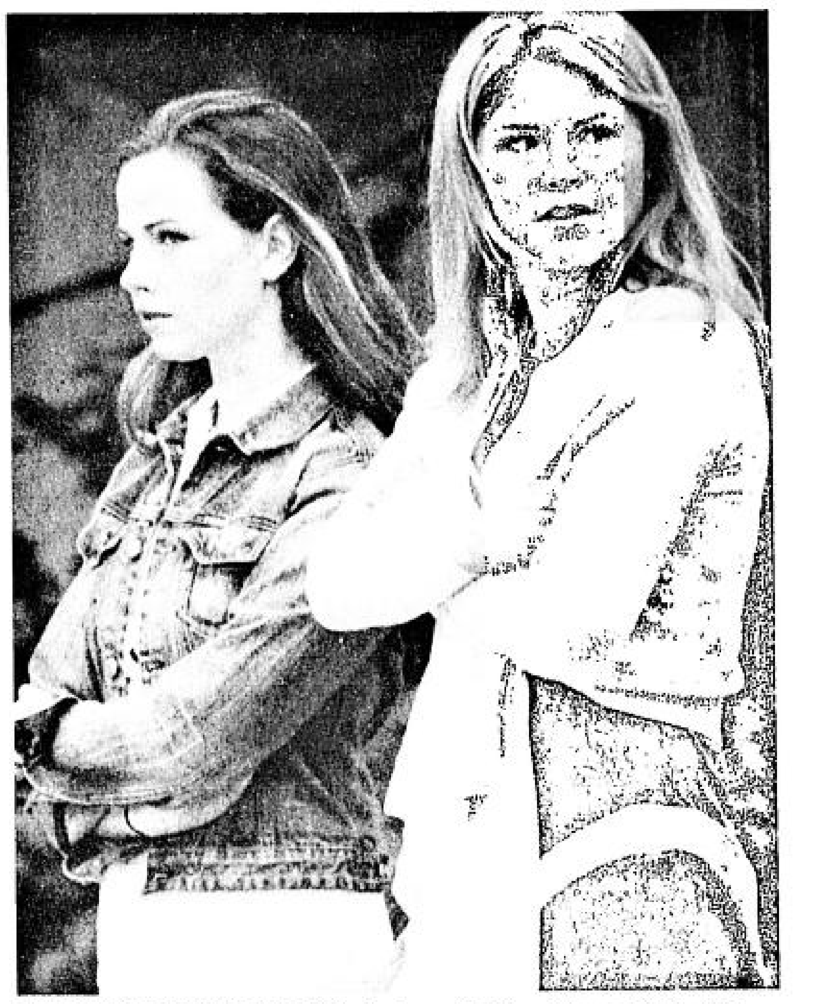
Only sporadic gunfire crackled through Fallujah, west of Baghdad, after the truce.

Iraq's US Gov. Paul Bremer said no terms had been imposed on the rebels in Fallujah, where Iraqi mediators have talked to town leaders and guerrillas for the past two days.

A representative of Iraq's US-appointed Governing Council negotiating with the rebels said the 12-hour truce, which began at 10 a.m., would be extended for a further 12 hours and that talks would resume on Monday.

"We reached an agreement to stop the bloodshed until tomorrow morning in order for us to come back to Fallujah to try and stop the bloodshed permanently and completely," Hashim al-Hassani told Reuters in Fallujah.

Rafa Hayad al-Issawi, director of Fallujah's main hospital, said: "I would say more than 600 (Iraqis) have been killed, but the number may not be absolutely accurate because many families have already buried their dead in their gardens." *Reuters*



PRESIDENT'S DAUGHTERS—Barbara (left) and Jenna Bush, the daughters of US President George W. Bush, walk together from the Darnall Army Community Hospital in Fort Hood, Texas, April 11 after President Bush and members of his family visited with soldiers wounded in Iraq. REUTERS

BOSTON EASTER

Mary Rogers, 3, dressed up for Easter, stands by duck sculptures at the Boston Public Garden in Boston, April 11, while she strolls with an aunt. AP

Aide of Sokor ex-president draws jail term

SEOUL—The right-hand man of South Korea's Nobel Peace Prize winning president Kim Dae-jung was sentenced Monday to 30 months in prison on bribery charges, court officials said.

A Seoul court said Park Jie-won, who brokered a landmark inter-Korean summit in 2000, was found guilty of taking bribes from South Korea's third largest conglomerate, SK Group.

The court also slapped Park with a fine of 70 million won ($61,300).

Park has already been sentenced to 12 years in jail on charges of taking 15 billion won from Hyundai Group. He has appealed the sentence but a higher court verdict has yet to come.

Park and other associates of Kim Dae-jung, who stepped down in early 2003 after a five-year term, have been implicated in the illegal transfer of money to North Korea ahead of the summit.

Last month, the Supreme Court approved suspended sentences of up to three years for former intelligence chief Lim Dong-won and three businessmen.

Both Lim and Park have been accused of helping Hyundai Group withdraw loans from a state bank and remit $450 million to North Korea.

The money transfer sparked accusations the government of Kim Dae-jung used bribes to set up his meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong-il.

In a separate case Monday, prosecutors indicted two senior officials of the food giant Lotte Group for illegal donations to politicians during the 2002 presidential election campaign. *AFP*

Bush on the defensive despite memo's release

CRAWFORD, Texas—President George W. Bush remained under pressure Monday over his counterterrorism strategy before the Sept. 11 attacks,' despite the release of a memorandum which highlighted al-Qaida activity in the United States before the strikes.

A prominent member of the official commission looking into the 2001 attacks said they could have been prevented had US law enforcement and intelligence officials followed up on leads pointing to suspected terrorists at work in the United States.

But Bush said there was no way the administration could have prevented the hijacked airliners slamming into the World Trade Center towers in New York and the Defense Department headquarters in Washington.

"I can't say it as plainly as this: Had I known, we would have acted," Bush insisted Sunday to reporters on a visit to Ford Hood military base in Texas.

"I am satisfied that I never saw any intelligence that indicated there was going to be an attack on America: a time, and a place of an attack," he added while conceding "of course we knew that America was hated by Osama bin Laden."

The White House on Saturday released a Presidential Daily Briefing sent to Bush on Aug. 6, 2001, which warned that al-Qaida had penetrated the United States and of possible plane hijackings.

The Bush administration released the memorandum under pressure from the official inquiry into the Sept. 11 strikes. Parts of the copy were censored to preserve the identity of sources.

The memo, titled "Bin Laden Determined to Strike in the US," said that in mid-2001 Federal Bureau of Investigation agents suspected al-Qaida was preparing air hijackings and had been studying federal buildings in New York.

The memo was widely debated at a public hearing of the independent Sept. 11 commission on Thursday, when national security advisor Condoleezza Rice gave testimony.

"We have not been able to corroborate some of the more sensational threat reporting, such as that from a (-censored-) service in 1998 saying that Bin Laden wanted to hijack a US aircraft to gain the release of 'Blind Shaykh,' 'Umar' Abd al-Rahman and other US-held extremists," said the memo. *AFP*

Thousands in HK protest China's grip on voting laws

HONG KONG—More than 10,000 people took to the streets of Hong Kong on Sunday to protest against Beijing's ruling that it alone will determine the shape and timing of elections in the city.

In a move sure to irk China, the protesters marched to Beijing's representative office in Hong Kong chanting "Return the power to the people" and "One man, One vote."

The protesters, including women, children and people in wheelchairs, punched their fists in the air and waved banners that read "One country, two systems fail completely" and "Return the power to the people." They also carried balloons with caricature of Hong Kong chief executive Tung Chee-hwa.

"The reason why I'm doing this is for the future of my child, for her freedom," said housewife Bonnie Cheung, who brought her young daughter to the protest.

It was the first mass protest organized after China's parliament revised clauses in Hong Kong's constitution last week, giving Beijing full control over how and when the city chooses its leaders and lawmakers.

"It's an attack on Hong Kong's legal system and its autonomy," Martin Lee, one of the city's leading democracy lawmakers, said of Bejing's ruling.

Organizers said about 20,000 people had joined the march.

Police said they would not provide a number. The marchers dispersed peacefully after tying black ribbons to the gate of Beijing's liaison office to symbolize their anger.

The protest also drew hecklers.

"All of you disgusting people, you should all be shot," one old man shouted at the marchers.

Hong Kong's government said in a statement it had noted the concerns of the people over China's interpretation of the city's constitution.

Last July, about 500,000 people took to the streets of Hong Kong over Beijing's demand for an anti-subversion law. The protest, which forced the planned law to be shelved, shocked the Chinese leadership and triggered a campaign by Beijing to discredit the city's pro-democracy figures.

While the move to change the constitution is legal, it has provoked an outcry from people, who say it erodes the high degree of autonomy China promised Hong Kong when it took back the British colony in 1997. *Reuters*

Briton bets all on one spin, wins

LAS VEGAS—A British man who sold all his possessions, including his clothes, stood in a rented tuxedo on Sunday surrounded by family and friends and bet everything on a single spin of the roulette wheel.

He won't go home empty handed.

Ashley Revell, a 32-year-old Londoner, sold all his possessions in March, took $135,300 to the Plaza Hotel in Las Vegas, did some low stakes gambling and then 'placed everything he had left on "Red."

The wheel was spun, a crowd of supporters including his Mum and Dad from London went wild, the ball bobbled over the slots and landed on Red "7"—and Revell walked away with $270,600.

"It all happened so quickly, it was spinning before I knew it," Revell said, adding he did not intend to try to double it again. He gave a $600 tip to the croupier and plans to party—and buy some clothes.

"It's really down to my friends and family and Mum and Dad," he told Reuters Television. "I knew even if I lost I'd always have a home to go to."

"I'm still against it," said his Dad. "He shouldn't have done it. He's a naughty boy. I tell my kids they shouldn't gamble. I've got four others and they're all going to want to go the same way." *Reuters*

Israeli, Palestinian girls join 'Miss Barrier' pageant

JERUSALEM—In three-and-a-half years of fighting, Ravit Rubin and Grace Karaa have grown accustomed to the sound of shooting between their neighborhoods. But recently, the 15-year-old girls met amid the din of blowdryers in a hair salon to discuss their hopes in an upcoming beauty pageant.

Rubin, a Jewish Israeli from the Jerusalem neighborhood of Gilo, and Karaa, a Palestinian Christian from the adjacent West Bank town of Bethlehem, are among 26 Israeli and Palestinian girls participating in the "Miss Barrier Line" pageant.

Organizers said they chose the name to emphasize that the girls come from an area of friction, but can still get along. Israel's West Bank separation barrier, which it says is needed to protect against suicide bombers, now stands between the two communities.

Gilo and Bethlehem were a key flashpoint early in the Israeli-Palestinian fighting that broke out in late 2000, as Palestinian militants and Israeli soldiers shot across the rocky valley separating the sides. Fighting in the area peaked in late 2001.

Now, after months of relative quiet in the area, Israeli Jewish businessman Avi Nagar and Israeli Arab beautician Jacqueline Yosef have decided to put on a pageant for residents of the neighborhoods. The pageant is scheduled May 31 in Gilo.

Last week, they brought together four of the girls, including Rubin and Karaa, for their first meeting. The gathering took place at Yosef's hair salon in an Arab neighborhood on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

"My dream is to be a model and my dream starts with this pageant," said Rubin, whose long hair frames a pale face with large eyes. "This will prove we can live in coexistence, that there is nothing to be afraid of." *AP*

RAVIT Rubin, 15, left, an Israeli Jewish girl from the Jerusalem neighborhood of Gilo, and Grace Karaa, 15, right, a Palestinian Christian from the adjacent West Bank town of Bethlehem are pictured in a hair salon in Jerusalem Thursday April 8. Both are among 26 Israeli and Palestinian girls who have signed up for the upcoming "Miss Barrier Line" pageant. AP

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Army major links Cebu political clan to rebels

By **Jhunnex Napallacan**
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—A ranking military official has linked the influential Martinez family of northern Cebu to the communist underground movement.

Maj. Melquiades Feliciano, commander of the 3rd Civil Relations Group, Civil Relations Service at the Central Command, accused Bogo Mayor Celestino Martinez III and his father, former assistant agriculture secretary Celestino Martinez Jr. of being supporters of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA).

The Martinezes vehemently denied the allegations, saying these were orchestrated by their opponents to ruin their bids in the May elections.

Mayor Martinez and his mother, Rep. Clavel Asas Martinez, are seeking reelection while his father is a candidate for governor. The three are running under their local party Independent-Masa.

Feliciano said they had the official receipt of the P4,500 allegedly paid by Mayor Martinez as financial support to the National Democratic Front.

The receipt was dated April 5, 2003, two months before it was recovered by the military in clearing operations following an encounter last year in Sitio Mangaljo, Barangay Ipil, Carmen town.

"Official receipt received from Honorable CM III the amount of 4,500 as financial support, signed by authorized person by NDF," the receipt read.

While the receipt only bore the initials CM III, Feliciano said it referred to the mayor—Celestino Martinez III.

He said the issuance of the receipt was for internal audit in the CPP-NPA.

Feliciano said Celestino Martinez Jr. initiated the creation of a non-government organization in 1995 when he was representative of Cebu's fourth district. The position was taken over by his wife when his term ended in 1998.

According to Feliciano, the organizers of the Northern Cebu Development Center Inc (NCDCI), which caters to livelihood projects, are identified with CPP-NPA personalities.

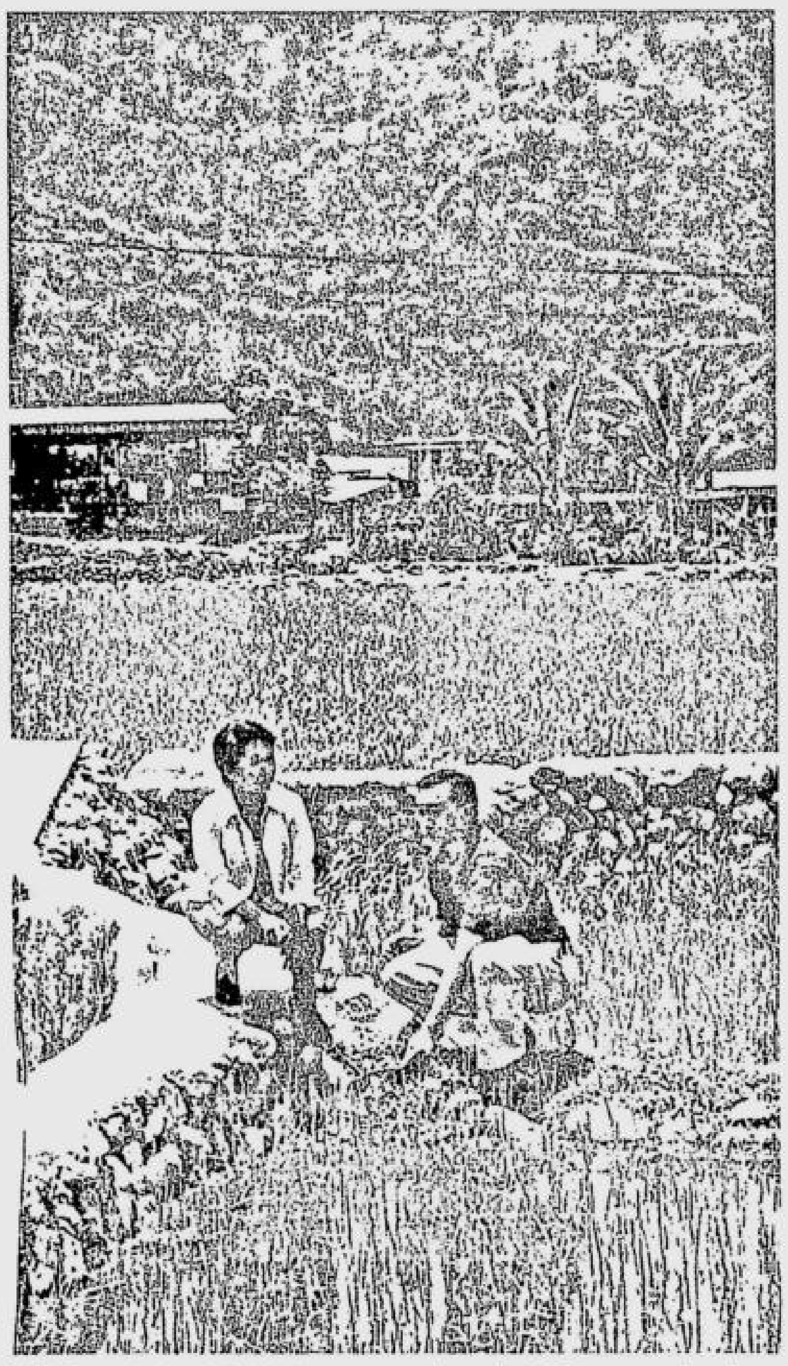
He said at the time the NCDCI was being organized, other personalities identified with CPP joined the group.

These pieces of information, he added, were in his report that he submitted last year to their central office.

The report was confidential and meant only for military officials so they could analyze areas infiltrated by the CPP-NPA.

Feliciano said he was not the one who leaked the report to the media. He said his office gave copies to the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency and to Gov. Pablo Garcia.

Mayor Martinez said Garcia, Daanbantayan Mayor Maria Luisa Loot and her husband, Senior Supt. Vicente Loot, were behind a plot to link them to the rebel movement.



TIME out for her hybrid rice program brought Ms Macapagal and NFA administrator Arthur Yap to the rice fields of Bontoc, Mt. Province to inspect the program's progress at a visit to the town's officials and candidates. JERRY CARUAL/MALACAÑANG PHOTO

Mt. Province candidates desert opposition camp

LOCAL candidates in Bontoc, Mt. Province have jumped ship to the camp of President Macapagal-Arroyo, Ms Macapagal's campaign leaders said in a statement.

In a manifesto of support signed by the mayors of the 10 municipalities of Mt. Province and presented to the President Saturday during a visit to Bontoc, Sagada Mayor Tomas Killip, president of the League of Municipalities of the region, said the shift in support was the mayors' way of thanking the President for addressing the region's concerns.

All, if not majority, of incumbent local leaders here either belong to the opposition KNP or the Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC) faction aligned with the camp of actor Fernando Poe Jr.

"Ms Macapagal has been very, very consistent in visiting us and showing her support," the statement quoted Killip as saying.

KNP gubernatorial candidate Harry Dominguez also declared his support for Ms Macapagal's bid for a full term.

"When I filed my candidacy, I was for FPJ. But I think I'm the only one pro-FPJ left (in the province) that's why i joined GMA," Dominguez said at a proclamation rally at the Bontoc municipal plaza.

In a press conference at the Ridge Brook Hotel, Ms Macapagal thanked the mayors for their support.

"We had the entire KNP line-up transferring to us and so we felt that's an important event and we're very, very grateful not only for the former KNP line-up but also for all the other local groups that are supporting the K-4 candidates," Ms Macapagal said in a statement.

Killip said while the public may have perceived the President to be ill-tempered, "in private and during work, we have found her to be very flexible because we could always raise our ideas to her."

"In public you might think she's ill-tempered but in private she's very, very approachable and we can disagree with her on policies of governance," Killip was quoted as saying.

"Sometimes we criticize her for some policies that affect us but she always assures us that she will ... sit down with us...," the mayor of Sagada added.

Quirino execs see more forest income through GMA order

CABARROGUIS, Quirino—Environmentalists here are optimistic that a proclamation issued recently by President Macapagal-Arroyo would finally end the age-old problem of forest degradation in Quirino.

Retired forester Andres Blando, provincial government consultant on the environment, said Presidential Proclamation 548, which declared Quirino a protected landscape, aims to preserve the province's forests to improve the local economy.

The proclamation covers 132,300 hectares of the remaining forests in Quirino. The area spans 51 barangays in five of the province's six towns: Maddela, Nagtipunan, Aglipay, Diffun and Cabarroguis.

"With the proclamation, we (in the provincial government) are optimistic that we could bring in more income for our province through the principle of natural capitalization," Blando said.

Under this principle, he said, tropical countries like the Philippines have to be compensated by wealthy auto manufacturers from other countries because of their forests' contribution to "carbon sequestration."

This process, he said, helps minimize global pollution.

Currently, for each hectare of forest in Quirino, the local government is bound to receive $704 in "pollution tax," Blando said.

"So the wider the forests become, the greater is our contribution to the global economy," he said.

The proclamation also imposes tighter regulatory measures on the province's forests, primarily on the prohibition of extraction of all forms of forest products, he said.

Before the proclamation, the degradation of the province's forests continued despite existing environmental laws.

Its accessibility has made the province vulnerable to migration and *kaingin* (slash-and-burn farming), according to Conservation International, an environmental non-government organization.

[illegible]

FALLBACK

Two women stand by the door of a church in Carmona, Cavite awaiting word on church activities during the past Holy Week.

Cop says Army, NPA clash preempts plot to kill bet

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The clash between New People's Army rebels and government troopers in Sta. Ana, Pampanga, on Sunday preempted the plan by the guerrillas to "liquidate" mayoral candidate Dindo Gamboa, the police said.

"(Gamboa) has refused to give into the NPA's demands to pay their permit-to-campaign fees," Senior Supt. Rodolfo Mendoza, provincial police chief, said in a statement here on Monday.

The candidate could not be reached to confirm this.

The skirmish, which broke out at 1:30 p.m. in Barangay San Agustin or about 2 km from the town proper, involved policemen and Army soldiers, and 23 rebels from the NPA southeastern guerrilla front led by one Ka Leony.

The bodies of the three suspected rebels killed in the gunfight have not been claimed or identified by their relatives, workers at the Nolasco Funeral Homes in Barangay San Isidro, also in Sta. Ana, told the INQUIRER on Monday.

Mendoza said the encounter "deterred the NPA from carrying out election-related violent plans, and continuing their extortion from candidates in the province." *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

US group says bases toxic wastes poll issue

OLONGAPO CITY—An American environmental consultant based in Washington DC has urged presidential aspirants to look at the problem of cleanup of former United States military bases in the Philippines as this can affect politics in the country.

"All politics is local and the personal is political. This means that during this next period in 2004, the issue of bases cleanup is only understandable to those running for president (of the Philippines) as an issue that might affect local politics," said Polly Parks in a letter to the People's Task Force for Bases Cleanup (PTFBC).

She asked families of those who died due to alleged exposure to hazardous wastes in former US bases in Zambales and Pampanga to demand a platform from the candidates to address their problems.

"In 2005, two presidents will undoubtedly meet again. But whether it is (US presidential aspirant John) Kerry and (Philippine presidential candidate Fernando) Poe (Jr.) or (US President George W.) Bush and (President) Macapagal-Arroyo, or any combination thereof, it is imperative that the issue dominate their scripted talks," Parks, who led the "Positive Legacy" tour of US non-government organizations experts to the Philippines in 1994, said.

Parks said although some would argue that the bases cleanup is a "parochial" issue and should not be included in national debate, PTFBC members should not be scared to bring this up before candidates.

"Even though you suffer the deaths of innocents, you are outlasting the old, white men who made the policies that created this travesty," she said.

She said the issue could cost Bush and Ms Macapagal votes in the upcoming elections, while for aspirants like Kerry and Poe, the issue could garner them support.

"For voters, it means if they know about the issue, they will factor it into their voting," Parks said. *Allan Macatuno, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

NBI asked to hunt German in Mindoro pedophile cases

FORMER Sen. Ernesto Herrera wants the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) to launch a nationwide manhunt for Reinhard Havikost, a German national accused of raping at least 10 children in Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro.

"No effort must be spared to bring the suspect to justice quickly," Herrera, a convenor of the Network Against the Sexual Abuse of Children (Nasac), said in statement.

"We must stress that the fugitive is facing criminal complaints for alleged non-bailable capital offenses punishable by life imprisonment or death," Herrera, a senatorial candidate of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, pointed out.

"Considering the grave nature of the charges that have been brought against Mr. Havikost, the authorities must grab him immediately," Herrera added.

With the assistance of social workers, at least 10 girls, aged 7 to 14, filed statutory rape charges against Havikost before the Calapan City prosecutor's office in February.

Up to now, however, the authorities have yet to arrest Havikost, who reportedly fled to Manila shortly before the charges against him were filed.

The victims alleged that the 53-year-old Havikost sexually assaulted them in his cottage in Puerto Galera between November to January. The girls claimed they were lured with cash, food and school supplies.

Herrera, meanwhile, prodded the Department of Justice to "use the full force of the law in criminally prosecuting" at least four other suspected foreign pedophiles.

Nasac records identified the four suspected pedophiles as American nationals Paul Jeffrey Anderson and Robert Richards, Japanese national Hiroshi Taguchi and German national Ludwig Friedrich Lotter.

Anderson, 55, is being held at the Oriental Mindoro provincial jail for sexually assaulting 13 girls, aged 8 to 12, also in Puerto Galera.

Richards, 65, is facing charges for sexually assaulting an 8-year-old girl in his hotel room, in Ermita, Manila.

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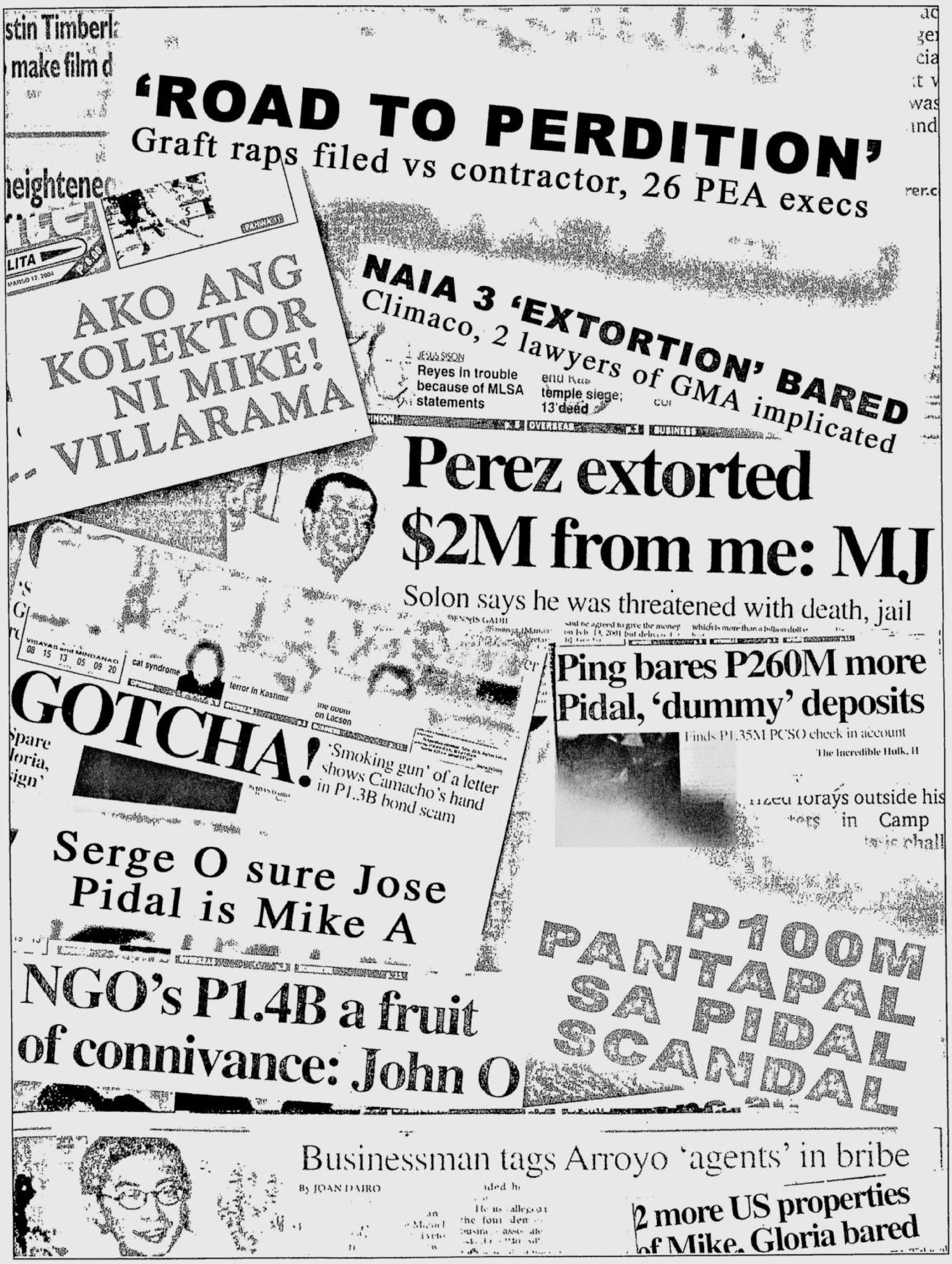

'ROAD TO PERDITION'

Graft raps filed vs contractor, 26 PEA execs

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NAIA 3 'EXTORTION' BARED

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temple siege; 13 dead

Perez extorted $2M from me: MJ

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Ping bares P260M more Pidal, 'dummy' deposits

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GOTCHA!

'Smoking gun' of a letter shows Camacho's hand in P1.3B bond scam

Serge O sure Jose Pidal is Mike A

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Businessman tags Arroyo 'agents' in bribe

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Cop linked to Abra private armies

BAGUIO CITY—Abra Gov. Vicente Valera has accused a ranking police officer of coddling private armies in his province.

Valera, in a press conference at the Baguio Country Club on Friday, said the officer summoned the Abra police officer who led a team that stopped and confiscated firearms from one of these private armies on March 25.

"Instead of awarding Insp. Clyde Talosig (the leader of the police team) for his action, they instead called him for investigation in Manila," Valera told reporters.

The governor, however, declined to identify the police officer. But he said he had given the official's name to President Macapagal-Arroyo.

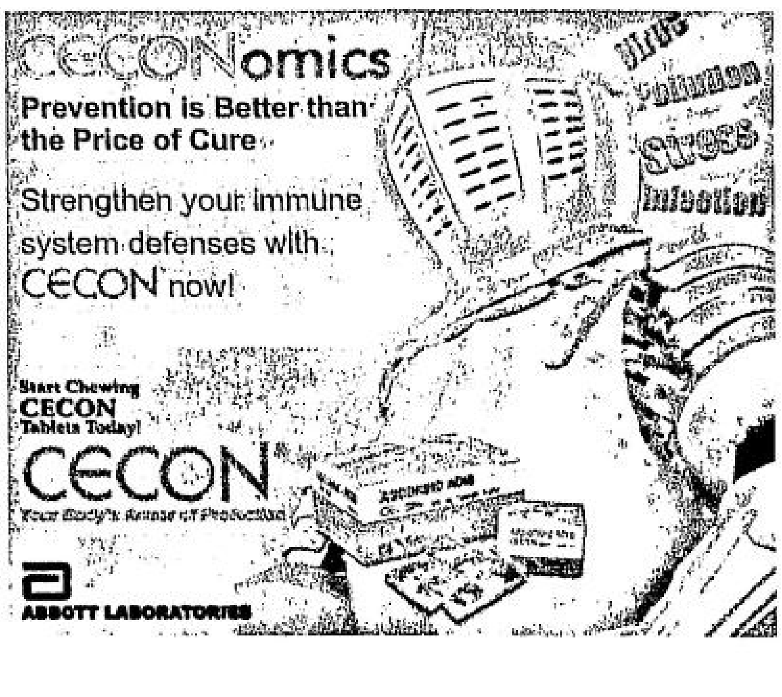
Valera said the presence of loose firearms and private armies in Abra has caused unrest, especially during the election season.

He admitted that 11 election-related acts of violence were reported in the province.

Valera said it is not the politicians or their armed bodyguards whom he is particularly concerned about, but the civilians that would get hurt in case fighting erupts between them.

On March 25, Talosig and his team seized high-powered firearms from four passengers of a vehicle in the capital town of Bangued.

The latest election-related incident in the province was the killing of a policeman in Dolores town last week. *Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*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Priest sues gov over unremitted GSIS payments

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—A priest has filed a complaint against Samar Gov. Milagrosa Tan for allegedly failing to remit the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) contribution of more than 1,000 provincial employees.

Fr. Pedrito Lucero, who claimed to be the governor's private secretary, filed a two-page complaint against Tan before the Office of the Ombudsman-Visayas based in Cebu City.

Also named as respondents in the complaint filed March 11 were provincial treasurer Bienvenido Sabenecio and provincial accountant Francisco Detosil.

The INQUIRER tried to reach Tan through her mobile phone but it was either unattended or out of coverage area. Sabenecio and Detosil could not also be reached for comment.

Lucero said Tan and the two provincial officials violated Republic Act 8291 otherwise known as the GSIS Act of 1997 when she failed to remit the contribution of the 1,135 provincial employees for the months of December 2003, January and February of this year.

"The said officials, conspiring and confederating together ... willfully, unlawfully and feloniously and repeatedly, in defiance and/or disregard of duty refused to remit the compulsory contributions of the provincial employees deducted from their salaries," Lucero said in his complaint.

In an interview over his mobile phone, Lucero brushed aside allegations that politics was behind his decision to file charges against Tan, saying he was doing this on his own.

Tan is seeking a second term under the Liberal Party. Her bid is being challenged by Mario Rono, of Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats and son of former Gov. Jose Rono whom Tan defeated in the 2001 elections.

" It just coincided that when I filed it, its election time," Lucero said.

According to Lucero, there were two reasons he decided to file a case against the governor—to compel Tan to remit the GSIS contributions and for the court to immediately take action against the governor.

Ecija folk urge wall on highway

CARRANGLAN, Nueva Ecija—Village officials in Capintalan in this town have asked authorities to install a protection wall in what they called "death spot" in a portion of the mountain highway here.

The spot is just immediately after a blind curve in Sitio Dalton, about 2 km from Dalton Pass near the Nueva Ecija-Nueva Vizcaya boundary. The spot leads directly to a 250-meter deep ravine.

Barangay captain Domingo Oliano said 12 vehicles, most of them cargo trucks, had already plunged into the ravine, killing several people.

He said the guard railing installed by the Department of Public Works and Highways was too weak it could not stop vehicles from falling into the ravine.

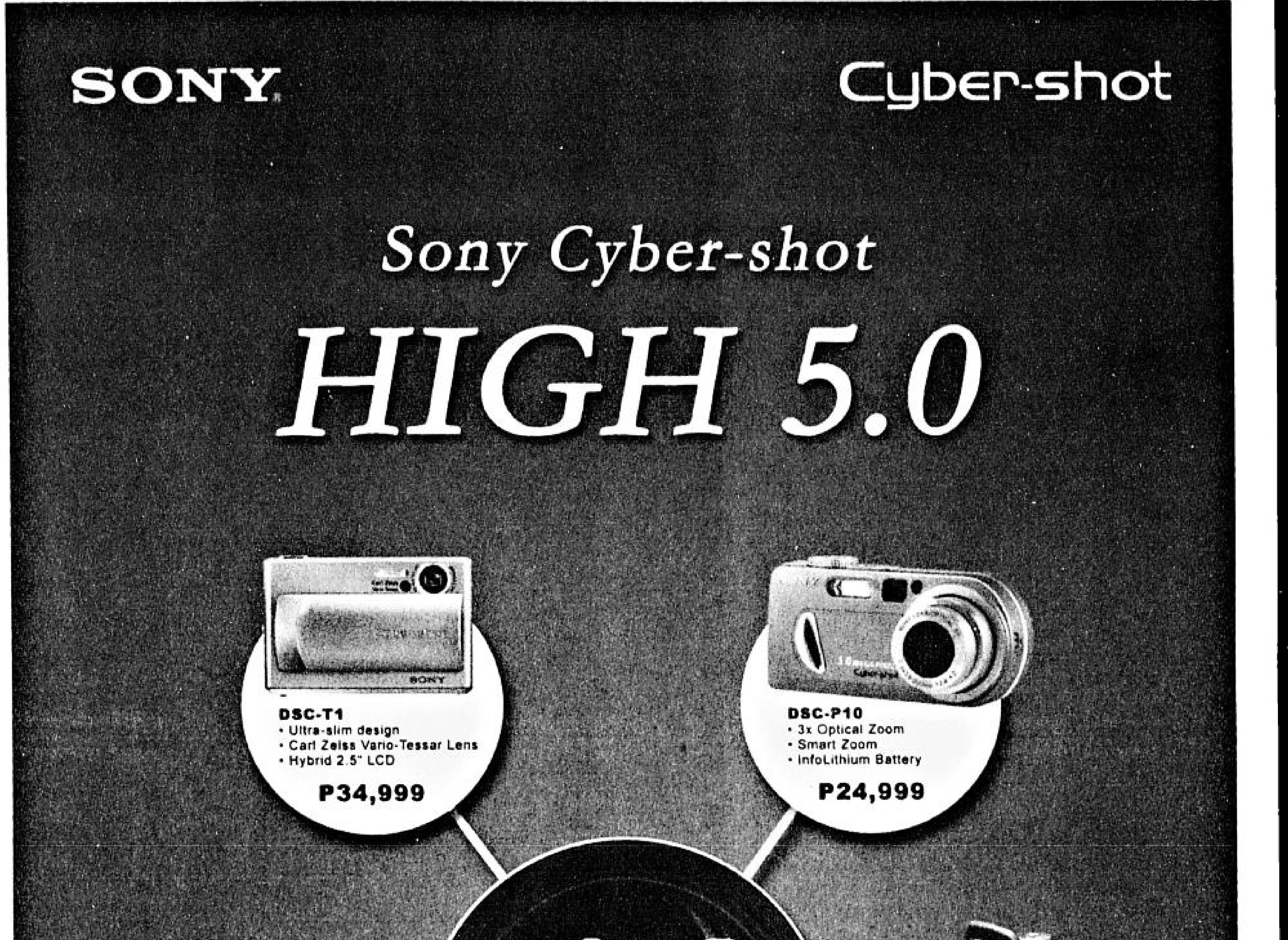
"A more sturdy protection wall on this spot can probably help prevent disastrous accidents," Oliano said.

His appeal came in the heels of two accidents during the Holy Week which killed eight people and injured 22 others. The first was on Holy Monday involving a Manila-bound Nissan Sentra. An engineer, two men and a woman who hitched a ride with him, were killed.

The second was on Maundy Thursday involving a Nelbusco bus, killing four people, one of them its driver, and injuring 22 others. The bus came from San Mateo, Isabela, and was bound for Manila.

Both accidents, said Oliano, happened just after midnight. Residents, Army soldiers and policemen raised the bodies of the victims from the bottom of the ravine by using ropes.

Oliano said the belongings, including cash and other valuables, were turned over by the residents and lawmen to their owners. *Anselmo Roque, PDI Central Luzon Desk*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Vital leads

EDITORIAL

COULD the airplane attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Center and other targets on Sept. 11, 2001 have been prevented? Testimony given before a US investigating commission last week so far has been inconclusive.

But a classified warning delivered to US President George W. Bush a month before the attack raises some questions that will have to be credibly answered by Bush or his national security adviser, Condoleeza Rice. The memo reported that the "FBI information indicates a pattern of suspicious activity in the country consistent with preparations for hijackings or other types of attacks."

Some say that the warning was too general for security agencies to go on with. Rice said the memo was largely "a historical document" prepared by the CIA because Bush was asking questions. She said there was nothing in the memo that suggested that an attack was coming in New York or Washington D.C.—nothing as to time, place, how and where. She said there was "no silver bullet that could have prevented the 9/11 attacks." Others, like Democratic strategist James Carville, said it was a warning. The suggestion was that the leads should have been followed up until more specific information could be obtained.

The presidential daily briefing on Aug. 6, 2001 presented some reports that Osama bin Laden had wanted to strike inside the United States as early as 1997 up to the spring of 2001. United States intelligence officials also received two uncorroborated reports in August 2001 suggesting that the terrorists might use airplanes in an attack.

If this was so, why were these leads not followed? Why was there no aggressive, intensive information gathering that could have neutralized the al-Qaida operatives?

The memo is expected to be declassified soon, and when this happens, it should help answer questions about the actions of the US government on the matter.

Acts of terrorism, like assassination attempts, are hard to predict. It is said that for a determined assassin, nothing is impossible. Similarly, for a determined terrorist or terrorist group, nothing is impossible. Terrorists will always think of new ways of carrying out attacks that would create the greatest impact on the consciousness of the world. Which was what the al-Qaida operatives precisely did in the 9/11 attack.

Who would have thought that planes would be used in the attack on the World Trade Center? The initial thought of TV viewers around the world when CNN broadcast the first attack was that it was an accident—a plane slamming into the World Trade Center. But then, US intelligence officials could—or should—have viewed the bombing of the World Trade Center in February 1993 with a truck carrying a 1,200-pound bomb as a possible precursor to other types of attacks on US targets.

Philippine security and intelligence officials should be following closely the hearings of the US commission on 9/11. They can get some lessons from its findings. For instance, one lesson is that no lead is too insignificant or too unimaginable to follow up. We are talking about lives here and no time, no effort, no personnel and no expense should be spared to ensure that the lives of the people and the security of their buildings are adequately guarded against terrorist attacks.

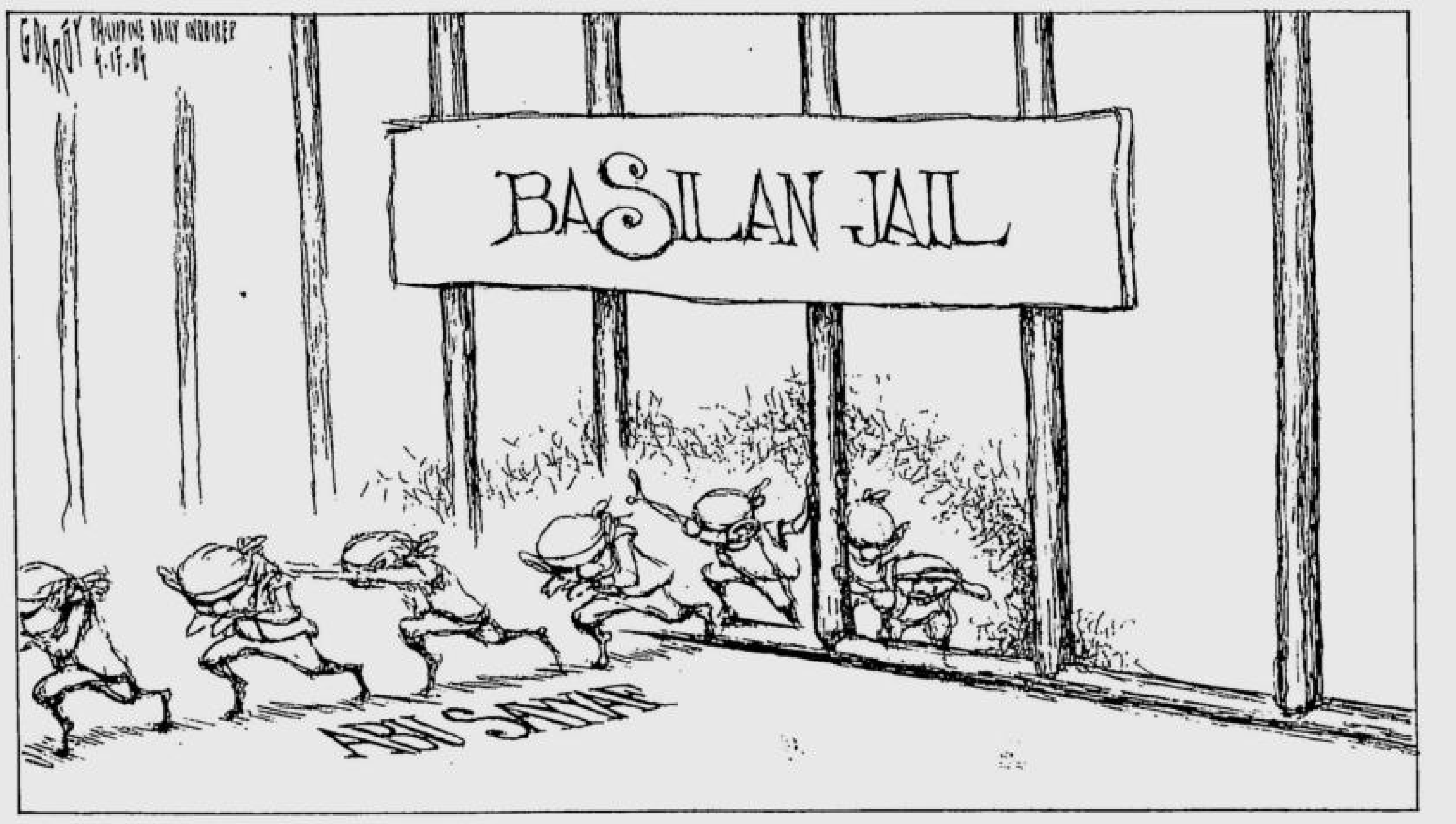
The security problem has assumed greater urgency with the recent escape of 24 Abu Sayyaf members (eight were later killed and nine were recaptured) and the disclosure that strategic targets like embassies, malls, hotels public utilities and train stations were on the bombing list of an Abu Sayyaf cell. It might reassure a worried and frightened people if the President would pause from her campaigning and convene her cabinet or form a task force to plan and carry out measures to better confront the heightened threat of terrorism in the country.

Early elections

FOREIGN COMMENT

THE VIOLENCE in Iraq has been triggered by the imminence of the June deadline for returning sovereignty to the Iraqi people. What we are seeing is a sudden jockeying for position among the rival Shia groups.

If there is a lesson to be drawn from the current unrest, it is not to delay free elections. That would only give extremist factions the opportunity to create more mayhem in the hope of using the street to gain what they might not be able to through the ballot box. However risky elections might be, letting the Iraqi people decide the relative merits of their own political parties is a surer way of isolating the radicals than relying overlong on coalition troops. *The Scotsman (Edinburgh, Scotland)*



A harem of eunuchs

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

IN THIS election, "hardly any debate, at the level of political leadership, has been held on issues, like management of our foreign debt," the INQUIRER's Randy David writes.

Foreign IOUs now exceed $57.4 billion. They strap a debt burden of P44,548 on every Filipino. "Better go to bed hungry than wake up in debt," the old Bicol proverb says.

The 718,821 who live within Cebu City's borders heft a debt repayment bill of P60,654 each. That comes from City Hall's yen loans that imploded due to serial devaluation. But official omerta bans their mention, even in today's campaign.

Cebu City's "payables for loans from Japan's Bank of International Cooperation for foreign-assisted projects will now cost P4.36 billion," Cebu Daily News' Rianne Tecson reveals.

These IOUs were tallied at P1.2 billion plus, when Mayor Tomas Osmeña signed for them in the mid-1990s. The dollar fetched P25 then.

Repeated devaluations, however, dragged the rate down to P51 in 2002. It is P56 plus today. No one guarantees that's rock bottom.

"Fluctuation of the peso ruined many," John Gokongwei noted in his San Carlos University address. "The businessman, who borrowed a dollar worth P29 in July 1997," pays double today.

Indeed, Cebu is littered with shattered firms. "Devaluation more than doubled (the landmark Plaza Hotel's) debt to $700 million," Sun Star business editor Cherry Ann Lim reported. The hotel folded in March 2003.

"That's the same roller-coaster Osmeña is strapped to," noted a CDN editorial, adding: Was Plaza a "dress rehearsal" for City Hall?

Yet, Cebu's most heated election issue today is about—believe it or not—the size of election billboards. Politicians bicker over sleaze and alleged mayoral behavior needing Prozac.

"Our political leaders argue over everything except the things that matter to our nation's future," David points out.

"People of the short straw" suffer. Over 34 percent of city kids are underweight, the Fifth Nutrition Survey reveals. It is 26 percent in Manila. Anemia afflicts 56 percent of pregnant mothers, almost double Makati's 35 percent.

A Mafia-like omerta, however, blots out mention of yen loans. Osmeña's policy statements—from inaugural speech to State-of-the-City Address—ignore Tokyo debts. Neither does the City Council.

"Continued smudging of City Hall's spiraling foreign debt ...is clamped in place by a seraglio (harem) of eunuchs known as the City Council," Sun Star noted. Subservience is rewarded handsomely.

In this studied silence, citizens have demanded transparency. "How much will my grandson pay when the Japanese loans fall due, in early 21st century?" asked Roberta Coronel Laya. The Freeman and other papers carried her letters.

"Grandchildren of your grandchildren will be grateful," was Osmeña's response. (Earlier, he claimed: Cebuanos would not "pay since these were national government undertakings.") Stony silence, since then, set in.

"Many crucial issues, of our national life, have been removed from the agenda of public discussion," Randy David wrote. "Servicing of the foreign debt is one of these."

In the city's 2004 budget, P375.4 million had been sliced off for interest payments on the South Reclamation project, Sun Star's Jasmin Suma-oy and Charmaine Rodriguez revealed.

That's "double the Local Development Fund." It doesn't even whittle down the principal. Billing for that starts in 2005.

"Lack of transparency did not allow Cebuanos to debate the wisdom of debts City Hall signed up for," a CDN editorial said. "That same lack of transparency blocks drafting of a feasible repayment plan."

Osmeña unveiled before the Cebu Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in August 2002, his most promising reform: citizen participation in city budgeting.

"They clapped," the mayor said of the businessmen's rousing ovation. "It's the first model of its kind, not only in the Philippines, but the whole world."

Well, not quite. Both the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank note that since 1989, the "municipal budget forum" in Brazil's city of Porto Alegre (population: 9.6 million) emerged as the "key institutional innovation."

Porto Alegre citizens participate in the budget process from start to finish. As a result, households with access to water rose from 80 to 98 percent. Access to sewerage facilities rose from 46 to 85 percent.

"Participatory budgeting is now in place in 50 Brazilian cities," the banks note. It was scheduled to be implemented in Argentina and Uruguay.

In Cebu, the pledge of citizen participatory budgeting "disappeared between the cracks without even a whimper... because such a radical system demands transparency," a CDN editorial noted. Such a reform is untenable where City Hall maintains a "blackout on yen-loan repayments... All that's left is a feeble pro-forma survey of generalized inquiries."

Where citizens actually review, evaluate and draft the budget is not Cebu but Naga City. Mayor Jessie Robredo won the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award precisely for model governance.

"We've lost control over many vital aspects of our national life," David noted. We have "long abdicated the right to speak on crucial issues that determine our nation's capacity to carry out meaningful reforms."

When IOUs are inevitably presented for collection, "that's when the fat lady rises and starts to sing," we cautioned in August 1997. But can the lady's song be heard in a "seraglio of eunuchs"?

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Choices

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I SAW a feature on the Philippines on BBC last week in Japan. It was on Fernando Poe Jr., the candidate the foreign media seem very interested in. The feature spoke of the "action king's" popularity, droves of common folk turning out to the streets to meet his caravan and toothless women swooning over him. It had a brief interview of Erap who said FPJ listens to the people and should do right by them. It interviewed people from Mindanao as well, who all said they were going to vote for FPJ because he understands them.

FPJ himself exuded confidence in the feature, answering without hesitation though with some modesty the question, "Do you think you're going to win," with "I think I will." Asked whether he was going to reverse GMA's foreign policy tack, particularly with respect to the American "war against terror (another huge concern by foreign media), FPJ replied—in English—that he would remain essentially on course but would change the government's approach to Mindanao from war to negotiation. The people there have always been close to his heart, he said, so his tack would be to "reach out" to them rather than unleash the troops on them.

The feature ended on a darker tone, however, several businessmen expressing reservations about FPJ. "He's an unknown quantity," one said, and the business community is normally fearful of unknown quantities. The question, he said, is: "Will he prove fit for the job?"

Most people abroad are asking the same question. Indeed, that was the thing I first thought of when FPJ officially declared he would be running for president. We would be the laughingstock of the world. It would be as though we never learned from our mistakes, repeating our same experience with Erap, believing illusion would take the place of reality, a hero in the movies would be a hero in real life. Everywhere I went last week, people asked me with no small amount of amusement whether the "movie star" had a chance to win.

I said he did, though I believed the one who really ought to was "the former education secretary," Raul Roco. The "movie star" had a chance to win, I said, because he had a very efficient campaigner. That was not Edgardo Angara, that was not Vicente Sotto, that was not even Dolphy, who had gotten the goat of the President with his barb about her being *tonto pa gihapon*.

That was GMA. Yes, GMA. She is the most efficient campaigner for FPJ.

The BBC feature on FPJ itself was curious for not mentioning GMA at all, except in one respect. That was her ardent embrace of George Bush's "war against terror," which the feature took to note was extremely popular in the Philippines. She was shown smiling happily behind Bush while Bush kissed babies during his visit to the country last year. The feature did end with the business community expressing serious concern about the unknown quantity, but it was completely silent about what the **known** quantity was.

In fact, what made the unknown less terrifying was that the known was already exceptionally so. Even from a business viewpoint, GMA would fail by every standard. All the figures are down, an inexcusable thing for any president, and certainly for an economist. The irony indeed is that it took an economist to plunge the country to its worst economic showing since 1986. That is shown by figures from independent sources, or external ones, which are less subject to manipulation. My friend, Vic Magdaraog, has compiled these figures:

The level of corruption has risen, according to the World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness report. Among 102 countries, we were 92 last year (0 is most honest, 102 is most corrupt), slipping from 76 in 2002. We have gone past even Indonesia (88 in 2003, 77 in 2002) in corruption. The only countries that are worse than us now are Uganda, Madagascar, Kenya, Honduras, Cameroon, Mali, Nigeria, Haiti, Chad and Bangladesh, a truly miserable company to keep.

According to the UNDP, the human poverty index, which measures longevity, knowledge and standard of living, has gotten worse, from 22 during Erap's time to 28 during GMA's time, and correspondingly the country's ranking in HDI has fallen from 77 during Erap's time to 85 during GMA's time. Unemployment has grown from 11 percent during Erap's time to 12 percent during GMA's time. While incomes in other Southeast Asian countries are rising, ours are falling. According to the World Bank, our per capita gross national income was $1,030 during Erap's time and $1,020 today. And of course the peso has plunged to an all-time low and is bound to go on free fall after the elections.

None of this includes the more patent vote buying GMA is currently doing courtesy of the taxpayer, her barefaced lying about not running, the plight she brought the country to late last year. None of it includes GMA's high-profile posturing against Moros, or the Muslims generally, oblivious of the OFWs presence in the Middle East, and which has succeeded only in the US itself giving advisories to its nationals to steer clear of our shores. Erap, it is safe to say, is not an economist. GMA is. Yet at no time has the country been in such dire straits than today.

It is GMA herself who is not making Filipinos afraid of a "movie star." It is GMA herself who is not making Filipinos—the business community included, though its members are often not easy to classify as so—afraid of the "unknown." Given the choice between a probable future threat and a very real present one, which one would you risk? Given a choice between no experience and bad experience, which one would you choose?

Of course there is another choice; this election does not limit the options to one or the other. But that is another story, one best left for tomorrow.

Folks split

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

I SPENT the later part of the Holy Week travelling through Bataan, part of Zambales, including Subic Freeport, and Pampanga, and I noted from conversations with town folks the same dichotomy characterizing other parts of the country. In the market of Balanga, unschooled older women vendors are rabid for FPJ and some of the older men said Bataan is FPJ country because he has been shooting his films there for decades. However, the younger vendors who have had better education easily see that a high school dropout cannot hack the job of being president. A lot of them are for GMA. One quality they like is her *kasipagan*, but many also said they want to see "continuity."

* * *

I found a scattering of Lacson followers, but basically the race there is between GMA and FPJ. I also saw the clout local officials carry: talking to Bataan fruit vendors along the highway, I encountered folks who will vote for GMA because their barangay captain is campaigning for her. At GMA's birthday celebration in Lubao, I queried Bataan Rep. Antonino Roman how things are, and he admitted it's an uphill fight for her in his province, but "we're giving it our best." But Pampanga is unabashedly GMA country.

* * *

With the tight race between the two top contenders, focus is on their respective campaign machinery and here funding becomes very crucial. Reports say the FPJ camp has a big problem since funds are not trickling in, doubtless due to perceptions that his campaign is beset with all sorts of problems and seems to be imploding. But though some may find it hard to believe, considering all the hoopla about K-4's "resources," funding is also a problem in GMA's camp, though its stalwarts admit it's not as bad as that of KNP.

* * *

Other factors being closely monitored are the current negotiations between FPJ and Sen. Panfilo Lacson and who between FPJ and GMA will get the support of the two big religious groups with "command votes," the Iglesia ni Cristo and El Shaddai. It's not difficult to imagine that the disarray of the FPJ camp is encouraging Lacson to pursue his campaign to the end, *baka makalusot*. Then, too, it's hard to imagine Lacson being pacified by the likes of Senators Angara and Sotto, considering all the harsh words that have passed between them.

But still, the pressure from the two big religious groups may be formidable. Frankly, I hope these two groups get a huge bolt of enlightenment from heaven and desist from backing FPJ if only out of a sense of patriotism. They made a huge mistake in supporting Joseph Estrada and we can only hope they don't repeat it.

* * *

Akbayan Rep. Loretta Rosales, commenting on the allegation of National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales that certain party list groups led by Bayan Muna have been diverting funds to the NPA, stressed that "these allegations have to be proven in fact." But "it does not help," says the feisty party-list representative, that Bayan Muna's legislators did not sign the House Bill sponsored by Akbayan making the extortion conducted by the NPA during elections a criminal offense. House Bill 6676, the Anti-Permit to Campaign (PTC) bill, was passed on third and final reading by the House, but is pending with the Senate.

* * *

Neither does it help, she says, that NPA spokesman Gregorio Rosal has "exempted" Bayan Muna from paying the PTC fees nor that its organizers have been "harassing" Akbayan members since she filed the anti-PTC bill. She claims that Bayan Muna people stormed the Angeles City headquarters of Akbayan and the tires of its leader's car in General Santos were slashed by people carrying Bayan Muna stickers. It also doesn't help, she says, that the Bayan Muna leaders, who are members of the House committee on civil, political and human rights, have remained silent on human rights violations by the NPA such as the burning of buses, bombing of cell sites and intimidation of candidates during elections.

I agree with Etta Rosales: the left-wing party list groups continue to have an identity crisis, but only by resolving this can they be totally accepted by the people. I campaigned for Bayan Muna in 2001 because I felt that progressive groups have a crucial role to play in our democratic system—as much-needed conscience for our reactionary legislators. But the abuses of the communist armed groups have failed to elicit strong denunciation from them, giving rise to the perception that their heart remains with the NPA despite their having joined the political mainstream.

* * *

Earlier I wrote of the support GMA draws from two big multi-sectoral women's groups, Kagabay ni Glo and Gloria Ladies Organization, founded by Imelda Nicolas, Evelyn Kilayco, Conchita Sevilla-Bernardo and others. These pillars of civil society point out that far from being just elitist groups, they count among their members women from the C, D and E groups, who join them in *pulong-pulong* sorties to public markets, malls, etc. The Kagabay ladies stressed that they're campaigning for a second mandate for GMA because of the many gains her presidency has made in areas affecting women and their families, such as passage of the Anti-Trafficking of Women and Children Act and the Anti-Domestic Violence Act.

Among the gains they cited was the setting up of a micro-finance program that has benefited over 1.3 million women entrepreneurs. The administration's electrification program has also reached 89 percent of the countryside, the highest of any presidency. The Kagabay ladies also asserted that the administration has conducted an all-out war against illegal drugs, bagging a number of *malalaking isda*, and pushed the successful "Ro-Ro" Nautical Highway program that has helped small entrepreneurs cut down the cost of transporting goods to the markets.

Defeat for 'peace messiah'

NEWS ANALYSIS

Dilip Ganguly

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka—About three years ago, a soft-spoken politician vowed to end the vicious civil war in this idyllic tropical island. He kept his promise, and after two years of peace, Sri Lanka's voters turned him out of office.

Why did Sri Lankans, particularly the majority Sinhalese, throw out Ranil Wickremesinghe—the man who was called their "peace messiah"—in Friday's elections?

After all, Wickremesinghe moved quickly to try to end the island's two-decade civil war that killed 65,000. Nine weeks after taking office on Dec. 5, 2001, he invited Norway to facilitate peace talks between his government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. He signed a landmark ceasefire with the ruthless rebel group on Feb. 22, 2002.

Suicide bombings stopped. Most assassinations of officials ended. Armed soldiers, roadblocks and arbitrary searches disappeared from the streets of the capital, Colombo.

But in the end, religious prejudice, ethnic animosity and discontent with the slow pace of economic recovery cost Wickremesinghe the snap polls. His party won only 37.8 percent of the votes, an 8 point drop from the 2001 elections.

By the time Wickremesinghe's main rival, hardline President Chandrika Kumaratunga, announced parliamentary elections early this year—more than three years ahead of schedule—voters were siding with her.

"He never realized that vast masses, who are poor, don't wait for the golden egg. What they have today is very important, and this is where Ranil failed," said Rohitha Mendis, who manages a shipping company.

Sri Lanka's business and investment community favored Wickremesinghe's reform and privatization agenda. But he was criticized for failing to help the poor.

"Peace is good, but you can't eat peace" went a pre-election joke.

Most of the $4.5 billion in aid to the ravaged country was on hold because it was linked to progress in the peace talks, which the rebels had stalled as they made increasingly tough demands.

Kumaratunga's political alliance secured 105 of the 225 seats in Parliament, despite fears of renewed fighting because of the president's bitter history with the rebels. They tried to assassinate her in 1999. Soon after the vote, the Tamil Tigers threatened to resume the war if a political resolution of their demands for autonomy wasn't found.

But the president's alliance says its election victory showed that most Sri Lankans agreed with its tough stance against the rebels. Kumaratunga charged the prime minister with making too many concessions to the rebels in peace talks.

Indeed, after a series of developments, ranging from the rebels smuggling in weapons to Wickremesinghe allowing the guerillas free access to travel, some did start to worry.

"People started to believe that the prime minister was giving too much to the LTT," said Jehan Perera of the independent think-tank National Peace Council.

Sumana Gamage, a Sinhalese woman who runs a small shop, echoed that sentiment. "In our neighborhood we often discussed why the terrorists are being treated so well," said Gamage. "Our government is giving them everything and not getting anything from them. This is not good."

Wickremesinghe often allowed the rebels to travel by government helicopters to Colombo for their numerous trips abroad, angering many Sinhalese.

Pervasive religious and racial prejudice fueled that anger. The majority Sinhalese, who are Buddhist, produced a constitution that made mostly Hindu Tamils second-class citizens when the former Ceylon became independent from Britain. Buddhism is the state religion, and militant monks preach there should be no concessions to the 3.2 million Tamils and the rebels.

Analyst Perera also blames the rebels for Wickremesinghe's downfall. "The LTT maintained a very rigid stand about their autonomy demand that left Wickremesinghe with very little space to maneuver," Perera said of the rebel demands for virtual independence in the Tamil-dominated northeast.

Ironically, the ceasefire and repeated Tamil Tiger statements that they would talk to any elected government, made many voters feel that they didn't need Wickremesinghe to maintain the peace.

During the election campaign, Wickremesinghe traveled across the nation, stopping to share lunch with villagers and sip tea in their huts. But he rarely made flamboyant promises.

"Ranil will not promise you a job if there is none," said Mendis. "But Kumaratunga is good at selling dreams."

Another factor that contributed to Wickremesinghe's defeat was the surprising gains made by the newly formed Buddhist monks' party, which won nine seats. It is widely believed they took votes away from Wickremesinge's party. *AP*

Nick Joaquin's version

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

THE PROBLEM with becoming an iconographic figure is that people tend to install you on a pedestal but relegate your work to a difficult-to-reach top shelf or leave it on a coffee table along with other unread books to impress visitors. This shouldn't happen to National Artist Nick Joaquin's "Culture and History," first published in 1988 and just re-issued. It's also time our younger generation acquainted themselves with one of the most readable of our writing artists. Joaquin deserves better and so does the reading public.

Those who are familiar with his work know that it is inspired by a past that was alive for him but to us exists mainly in the imagination. Unlike Joaquin, we use words like *tinidor*, *lamesa*, *zapatos* without realizing that we are doffing invisible hats to our heritage which some of us believe is either best forgotten or thrashed. We do that, unconscious that "before 1521 we could have been anything and everything not Filipino; after 1565 we became nothing but Filipino."

It seems to be considered a nationalistic gesture to belittle our Spanish past, to view the friar as a malignant cancer best expunged, to believe that the coming of Spain aborted the development of our "Asian-ness." We assert that our culture is cretinous and that the arrival of the West corrupted the Filipino. Joaquin's premise is that, on the contrary, the plow did not "corrupt, it begot, the Filipino." And if anyone is to blame (there goes that word again) for our lack of an Asian soul, it's the other Asian countries.

Chinese philosophy reached Korea, Japan and Formosa and should have reached us but didn't even if it did reach Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and Malaya. Hinduism reached Bali but bypassed us, as did Buddhism. It's not like China didn't know of our existence since it's in their annals that we are first mentioned as "a land fittingly inhabited by snakes and savages." A point of view that may explain why the Chinese passed on to the Vietnamese, whom they called Annamese, the culture of porcelain but never bothered to pass on the technology to us. Our relationship was purely one between buyer and seller. It took the West to bring the wheel, the plow, the dams and the fruits of the New World. Remember, too, that the Chinese already had a paper culture while we continued to write on tree barks. The Indons had a book culture and the Arabs a print culture. Yet, as Joaquin points out, within 30 years of Legaspi's coming, we started a paper culture, print culture and book culture.

"We did not get the wheel from India, or the theater from China, or the plow from Thailand, or the hospital from Cambodia, or city culture from Malaya, or the horse from Japan, or spice culture from the Indies, or architecture from Java, or mathematics and the sciences from the Arabs."

While various militant oriental faiths crisscrossed the surrounding countries, Islam only reached Sulu and part of the southern coast of Mindanao. It should have jumped from Sulu and South Mindanao to the Visayas but did not. Joaquin wonders whether our neighbors didn't just consider us "too poor, bleak, backward and hungry to be worth the trouble…"

We even used to boast that we were part of the Shrivijaya and Majapahit empires, but if this were really the case, none of their advancements in architecture, in maritime commerce, in religion was passed on to us. In effect, the rest of Asia ignored us.

It was actually the Galleon Trade that opened Asia to us. The Chinese and Japanese suddenly decided to settle here. Manila became "the port of Asia" and the encounters with our neighbors helped to "Asianize" us.

It takes a Joaquin to point out that though our relations with China date back to the Tang Dynasty, the Chinese had little influence in our cooking. It was only after 1565 that Chinese cooking entered our vocabulary as "*pancit guisado, camaron rebosado, lumpiang frito, torta de cangrejo, jamon de funda, morisqueta tostada.*" We should have been a chopstick culture but aren't.

The fascinating part of reading Joaquin is his novel point of view. You must pick up his "Culture and History" and see what he has to say about the Santo Niño of Cebu. The Child was here before the coming of the missionaries and before the institutionalized Church. He joined our pagan idols (the Cebuanos were worshiping Him as a rain god) "if only to defeat and demolish them." Joaquin sees this as an act of the Lord "preparing us for the Faith."

The chapter on "Ikon, Friar and Conquistador" tells us that those three are what we are. It is the 300 years of Spain that shaped us. We emerged Christian in faith and Christian in culture. Had we not, then we could easily ignore it as an interruption in our history. To reject it is tantamount to cutting off our roots.

It was in the colonial period that the Philippines achieved the integrity of nationhood. When the Tagalogs and Pampangos were sent to quell revolts, it was not to "divide and conquer" but rather to "unite and consolidate." Any revolt, had it succeeded prior to 1896, would have meant the dissolution of the country.

Joaquin's ideas come tumbling forth, one after the other offering another point of view, in some cases effectively novel. You may not agree with them, of course. But this is what makes Joaquin's book thought provoking and thoroughly entertaining.

Other side of paradise

BORED and alone again naturally at 5:30 a.m. last Valentine's Day, I thought not of love but of national pride.

A Japanese friend sent me an e-mail narrating how she got herself a copy of "Smokiest Hits, The Best Album" by Smokey Mountain through the Internet. She said she loved the song "Kahit Habang Buhay" even though she didn't understand its meaning because not only did the CD come without a translation, it didn't have the lyrics at all.

YOUNG BLOOD

Jay Gallera Malaga

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

And then, came the avalanche of questions reminiscent of the Payatas dumpsite tragedy. While it didn't quite measure up to the catastrophe that was the collapse of a mountain of garbage, we dug up the subject matter anyway. Formulaic explanations piled up inside my head.

Before she got to the "meaty" questions, she asked me first where in Japan I got myself a copy of the CD with the lyrics for 100 yen (about P50). I could have told her how we can smell *ukay-ukay* or anything on sale and second-hand from miles away. Instead, I said, "Secret."

Then, she dropped the bomb: "Have you ever seen a real 'smokey mountain' in Manila? I want to know how it was. Some said there is no 'smokey mountain' anymore. But I heard that it didn't disappear; it was just the place that changed. Is it true?"

"My Filipino host family was really rich," she continued, "but I saw many poor people in the street. And in Japan, many Filipinos are working. Their working conditions are sometimes not good. It's true that some Japanese buy Filipino women.

"I met a girl who was working in my host family's house. Her mother and brother had no job, and she had no father. She said she wanted to work in Japan and marry a Japanese. My host mother said the girl would go to Japan to work as a maid. I really worry about her. She is my age. I want to do something for her. I wish her happiness."

I know this is already recycled garbage to us. Well, aside from telling her she was right many times, I assured her that our government was doing something to solve the problem. I explained that sometimes we are left with no choice but to go somewhere to work even in the most extreme of conditions, even to the point of trading our flesh.

This whole trash talk started with "Paraiso," the beautiful Smokey Mountain song. As to how my Japanese friend (and so many other foreigners) came to know Smokey Mountain and that masterpiece, it is a long story but this one is the shortened version.

I met my Japanese friend and other Japanese and Southeast Asian youth leaders through a Japanese government-sponsored cultural exchange program. We visited Southeast Asian countries and Japan aboard a boat called Nippon Maru (where most of the crew were Pinoys). The experience was paradise-like, but it was not that smooth, especially being a Filipino among foreigners.

While we are known to be great singers (to the point that other delegates cried every time we sing Filipino love songs) dancers and English speakers, we also have the reputation for being ill-disciplined, vandals, latecomers, polluters, etc.

So we in the RP delegation had to redouble our efforts to impress everybody right from the start. We prepared appropriate, government-friendly answers to questions ranging from the Abu Sayyaf to zero economic growth. We saw to it that we followed instructions, arrived at least 15 minutes before assembly time and formed two straight lines, one for the male, another for the female.

We accumulated *pogi* points from Singapore to Thailand, our fourth port of call. During the course of our trip, amid the Kris-Joey scandal, we got news that one government official close to our heart had been killed. So during our cultural presentation in Malaysia, wearing all black, we dedicated "Paraiso" to this official. We had given out copies of the lyrics of the song and informed the other delegates that we were dedicate the song to somebody who just "died" back home.

The song became a hit. And while the song spoke of a paradise lost to pollution, we created a wonderful Philippines in their minds. We were singing our way to the peak of the reputation chart.

But that was until we arrived in the Philippines, our fifth port of call. The port was very clean and the view from there up to the Westin Philippine Plaza was so… Singaporean. We had Studio 23's JC Gonzales as emcee and Chairman Bam Aquino of the National Youth Commission to welcome us. The prayer was performed by a winner in the National Music Competition for Young Artists, which made our early musical efforts sound very amateurish but still justified our reputation as great singers. A rondalla entertained the delegates as they partook of some delicious food.

Even the absence of a top government official who only sent a representative to read his speech couldn't dent our reputation. It took a woman politician, who was not supposed to have a part in the program, to undo everything we had built. She took hold of the microphone and babbled that you could do anything in the Philippines, that's how tolerant the country was. You could got wild, but "just make sure you don't get your cell phones snatched." She said if you wanted to see gays, there were plenty of clubs where they performed. It was as if she didn't know that she was talking to youth ambassadors from Japan and Southeast Asia, many of them Muslims or Buddhists. Everything that we Filipino delegates built went crashing down right here in our home court. In our embarrassment, many of us wished the ground would open up and swallow us.

The worst part about it was that she was telling the truth. It was as if we had made liars of ourselves by assuring the delegates that our country was safe. She was concerned about the safety of the delegates, while we were trying to put up fences to hide the squatters. We had no right to kill the messenger.

We were ready to present the sad side of paradise. We were ready to introduce the "place where a dying river ends." I was ready to say, "If empty cans were all I have, what a joy! I never tried to take someone else's coins and live with fear like the rest of the boys."

Maybe next time, "we could expect some truth and hope and respect from the rest of the world." But for now, let us grab some shovels and build a new paradise out of the garbage we find ourselves in.

Jay Gallera Malaga, 23, is a youth columnist for Sun Star Bacolod and a Psychology graduate of Colegio de San Agustin-Bacolod.

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LETTERS

A monument to Fil-Am friendship

APRIL 9 has been designated as Filipino-American Friendship Day, a historic and permanent annual event for the Kissimmee community in the state of Florida.

At the center of this glorious celebration is the Bataan-Corregidor Memorial located in the southeastern corner of the Kissimmee Lakefront Park.

Like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C., the building of the Bataan-Corregidor Memorial had to start in someone's mind. A seed has to germinate.

A Filipino, who is a long time resident of Kissimmee and a frequent contributor to the Orlando Sentinel, by the name of Menandro de Mesa, had that vision. This former Philippine diplomat conceived of a monument that would recall the heroic defense of Bataan and Corregidor by both Filipino and American soldiers during the Second World War.

Where to build such a monument?

Washington D.C, which is home to famous presidential monuments, would have been the perfect place. But to obtain a spot in the nation's capital, no matter how small the footage, was never an option. It would require an act of the US Congress to undertake such a massive project.

Discouraged not a bit, de Mesa turned to Richard Herring who was at the time the Commissioner of the City of Kissimmee. Herring listened and saw potential in the idea that never stopped to percolate in de Mesa's mind.

It took some time to transform the potential into actual. With the concerted efforts of a group of enterprising Filipinos and Americans, again in a collaborative move, what started as a dream became reality.

The first of its kind ever built in the United States, the monument shows a Filipino woman offering water to an American G.I. and a Filipino soldier during that dark chapter in Philippine history known as the Bataan Death March. The trio is a powerful reminder that blood was shed and had become the common bond that brought about a special brand of friendship between the Filipino and American soldiers who fought and died side by side in World War II.

With every word already written and read about this bloody struggle that took place more than sixty years ago, and the resulting friendship borne of that conflict of long ago, there is reason to rejoice. For there is no greater patriotic feeling than to see Filipinos and Americans embrace each other, this time with all hearts beating as one, both in peaceful acceptance and joyful remembrance.

—ELLEN LANSIGAN ELPHICK,
lawyer, Orlando, Florida, USA

Baywalk is too noisy

THE TRANSFORMATION of Manila Bay is commendable as it is now a haven for promenaders. But the strip is causing too many sleepless nights among residents along Roxas Boulevard.

Restaurants owners and café joints, including agencies that issue permits for these loud establishments, disregard peace and security for profit. Roxas Boulevard is now the modern Ermita red joint strip, with loud music, live bands and singers that sing at the top of their voices throughout the night, even on weekdays when obviously everyone is trying to get a good night's sleep for work or school. These joints cater to drunkards and night walkers.

What was once a restful sight at Manila Bay is fast turning into a '*feria*.' In fact, some residents of condominiums in Malate have opted to move to Makati, in search of a more peaceful place to live in.

Progress in cities is a welcome development but the lives of people must be given utmost consideration. In this part of Manila, it appears that business and commercial establishments are given special privileges. Just look at those street parties in Adriatico Circle, with café tables on streets (as if there is enough roadway for cars!). Small time wannabees have followed the big-time Adriatico trend-setters. Practically, anyone in Malate can put tables and chairs over the fence and serve beer all night! It's Baclaran all over again! Perhaps, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority should inspect Malate.

We believe in free enterprise and partying all night is surely fun, but certainly, not at the expense of your neighbors.

—LITO SANTOS
Victoria Castro
1716 MH Del Pilar, Malate

Time to create appellate economic courts

AS IN Darwin's Theory of Evolution, the Supreme Court must evolve, grow and be responsive to the realities that confront the Philippines today.

In recent years, our Supreme Court has ruled on economic issues raised by powerful law firms with strong political connections to those in power.

As a result of these Supreme Court decisions, the Philippines has emerged as against foreign direct investments (FDI), something that we crucially need at this time, more than the usual government foreign borrowings for unproductive projects that are the hallmarks of excessive corruption.

It's the duty of every member of the Supreme Court to study, and formulate decisions that are compatible with the growth and recovery of the Philippines.

It is the misfortune of the 82 million Filipinos today that the Supreme Court is highly "politicalized" and perceived by many as the only highest judicial body in the world under the Office of the President.

We need foreign direct investment (FDI) to stave off our national economy from total bankruptcy. If our country must be transformed into an attractive FDI destination, the government should guarantee a level playing field for all and complete transparency, not to mention good governance.

It is high time that our Supreme Court reinvent itself and leave economic and business issues to competent authority. Along this direction, we should create special divisions, say, Appellate Economic Courts, devoted exclusively to the resolution of economic issues by specially trained jurists with solid backgrounds in business and economics.

Such change is imperative and urgent if the Supreme Court will be one of the positive pillars not only of our democracy but of our country as well.

Of course, this will mean additional budget allocation, but at the same time it will unclog our judicial system.

—VIC DEL FIERRO JR.,
president, Coalition for Consumer Protection and Welfare Inc.
vdelfierro@hotmail.com

Corruption in your hand

IN YOUR Letters section on March 23, 2004, a writer complained of the return of corruption. First of all, it never left; and secondly, one can't complain of corruption and at the same time be a part of it. Why is he complaining of the corrupt people in government and in the same breath admit that he had to "pay" them bribe money. Sure he would be inconvenienced if he did not pay them, perhaps he had to wait longer than the rest, but he cannot complain about corruption and at the same time participate in it. Such is the sacrifice one has to make if he truly has a moral advocacy. Who is he kidding? The Philippines is corrupt mostly because of "corruption-hating" people such as the writer who think they stand above the other corrupt people simply because they disapprove of it. I have news for the letter writer. He is no better than the briber who did not see anything wrong with what he did, and not write his favorite newspaper to condemn such incident. He is as corrupt as any one who had bribed those officials. The question is whether you do or do not, not whether you approve or approve not.

—ANDREW DE CASTRO,
aad@bengzonlaw.com

Talking about the 'masa'

CONRADO de Quiros wrote that the reason we cannot solve poverty is because we do

not see it. I agree, but there are other reasons.

Try "talking to it" (poverty) as well. *Baka magka-intindihan at ma-solve ang problema.* When people (the masa?) understand "why" they continue to be poor, they may know "how" to choose their leaders wisely. *Kaya lang*, we, the "elite" (*kuno*), persist in just continuing to talk to each other in our own hifalutin language. And, we talk "about" them, instead of "to" or "with" them and poverty. They would not understand what Mr. de Quiros is talking about, nor would they be reading a very informative paper like the Philippine Daily Inquirer.

Siguro mabuting ipa-study sa mga sociologists or mga experts sa field na ito kung paano tayo magkakaintidihan so we can have an informed electorate. Kung takot tayo sa masa na bumoboto lamang sa mga artista, siguro napakarami talaga ang mga ito! Kawawa naman. We even have a name for them : the "Great Unwashed"? Or something like that? *Hindi ba dapat na hanapan ng solusyon dahil grabe na ang problema? Talagang matatabunan na lang ang mga "elite" (Kuno included).*

A joke circulating around here goes: In the affluent or "elite" households like the Makati enclaves, a survey showed that 2/3 will vote for any *artista*. The economist, lawyer, evangelist and senator will garner the remaining 1/3. Consider the gardener, cook, *yayas*, maids, *mayordoma*, butler, drivers, etc. who outnumber the *senyor* and *senyora* and their children.

—JOSIE LIM CRUZ
1003 Julian Pl Rockville, MD USA

Face population issue now

IN AN interesting article on Sept. 28 ("Are there too many Filipinos?") it was revealed that the Philippines has become the 12th most populous country in the world and that its population has doubled between 1970 and 2000.

Now you quote Tomas Osias of the Commission on Population as predicting it will double again in the next 30 years to some 160-170 million. Indeed the national population is currently growing at 2.36 percent per annum or 1.7 million new births—the highest birthrate in Asia every year.

Your articles also point the finger at the Roman Catholic Church as the culprit because of its refusal to countenance artificial methods of birth control. Well, of course, ultimately nothing can excuse the individual couples of this land for not exercising more self-restraint but, as some 83 percent of the population are its members, the Catholic Church, too, is partly responsible for the situation. If its bishops are really concerned about poverty in these islands should they not be focusing upon its causes? Why then are they not using their influence to conduct right now a major publicity campaign through their local churches, through the media and billboards urging couples to practice self-restraint and promoting the 'rhythm method' (which they permit), human sterilization, and the widespread use of condoms (which are purely preventative) etc?

In the light of Pope Paul VI's encyclical Humanae Vitae (1968) they would stop short of any contraceptive pill which kills an embryo or causes abortion. Their logic is understandable.

God alone gives life; only he has the right to take it away. As an Anglican priest for 33 years, I sympathize with this standpoint. In England I was for many years a member of LIFE, one of the largely Catholic organizations devoted to protecting the unborn child. (Around 100,000 fetuses are being destroyed in Britain every year!)

With regard to contraception, surely all Christians should encourage research to develop a pill which can prevent fertilization rather than kill the embryo. In the meantime, however, might it not be the lesser of two evils to use one of the existing contraceptives rather than condemn large numbers of people to a life of poverty and degradation?

You have mentioned that only two of the presidential candidates favor birth-control but can any of the others, who seriously wish to address the issue of poverty, afford to ignore it?

—REV. DR. ANDREW DAUNTON-FEAR
St. Andrew's Theological Seminary
P.O. Box 3167, 1099 Manila

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A graver mistake than the Iraq war

COMMENTARY

John Passacantando

Bush wants to move America back into the business of developing, testing and building new nuclear weapons. He seems to believe that these weapons will benefit US security

IT has been a year since United States President George W. Bush launched his war in Iraq. It has been ten months since he landed on the aircraft carrier the USS Abraham Lincoln and declared "Mission Accomplished." Where do we stand now?

Thousands have lost their lives, and the violence and peril in Iraq persist. Relations between America and its allies, frayed by the war, have reached a low point, as has the standing of the United States in the eyes of the world.

While people everywhere hope that the Iraqis find their way toward stability and freedom, the only real beneficiaries so far are the giant US corporations who have received exclusive contracts to service Iraq's reconstruction.

US State Secretary Colin Powell and others now admit there is no proof linking Saddam Hussein's regime and al-Qaida, thus negating a key rationale for the US invasion. In fact, al-Qaida arrived in Iraq only in the wake of the war, taking advantage of the prevailing chaos to pursue its destructive aims.

And what of the central explanation for the war—the US claim that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction? The chief US weapons inspector, David Kay, says that nothing significant has been found. It appears that the vaunted evidence of an Iraqi WMD threat was manufactured, through incompetence or deliberate deception, at the CIA and the White House.

George W. Bush's pursuit of illusory WMD in Iraq is all the more tragic and outrageous when one considers that he has failed to address the real WMD threats in the world.

First, he wasted years and months allowing his ideological and visceral reaction to North Korean dictator Kim Jong Il to prevent serious talks addressing the North Korean nuclear threat. The Bush Administration also failed to devote the necessary resources and skills to address nuclear dangers in Iran, Israel, India, Pakistan and the former Soviet Union.

Worse, every day Bush deepens his failure to lead by example, to demonstrate by his actions adherence to a proposition that even Ronald Reagan eventually accepted: A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. If the US, as the country with the largest number of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, fails to live up to its treaty obligations, how can the rest of the world be expected to comply with theirs?

Bush turned his back on the ABM Treaty, considered by Republican and Democratic presidents for thirty years to be essential to curbing the nuclear arms race.

And Bush has abandoned any US interest in the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which his Republican brethren blocked under President Clinton. That treaty committed nations of the world to forego nuclear weapons test explosions. Budding proliferators agreed to go along, as did those nations already possessing nuclear weapons. The treaty provided a real opportunity to curb the race to get nuclear weapons.

Why does Bush oppose Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty? The answer is clear. Bush wants to move America back into the business of developing, testing and building new nuclear weapons. He seems to believe that these weapons will benefit US security.

Recently, the US Congress, on Bush's demand, ended restrictions on programs that could lead to the production of new so-called "low-yield" nuclear weapons. Bush officials, freed of what they called the "chilling effect" of these restrictions, gave weapons labs an order to proceed with dispatch. They wrote that "potentially important areas" of new nuclear research would include "agent defeat"—i.e. killing soldiers—and "reduced collateral damage"—i.e. not killing so many civilians. In other words, America wants to develop new nuclear weapons better suited for use on the battlefield, and thus more likely to be used.

This full-speed-ahead order drew the ire of even a leading committee chair from the president's own Republican Party, Representative David Hobson, who wrote of the new Administration guidance: "The only message conveyed to the weapons laboratories is that of unbridled enthusiasm for new weapons designs and for seeking new military missions for nuclear weapons."

Meanwhile, the Administration is planning for later in 2004 a "subcritical nuclear experiment" which, US officials acknowledge, will look much more like a full-blown nuclear explosion than any test conducted since the United States began a moratorium on testing in 1992.

Countries deciding whether to join the nuclear club will surely be influenced by Bush's resolute line of thinking that the most powerful nation on earth needs more nuclear weapons to defend its national interests. The war in Iraq, pursued for chimerical nuclear and other mass destruction weapons, was bad enough. Developing a new generation of US mini-nukes, which can only spur nations around the world to accelerate their own quests for nuclear weapons, is the height of irresponsibility.

John Passacantando, executive director, Greenpeace USA.

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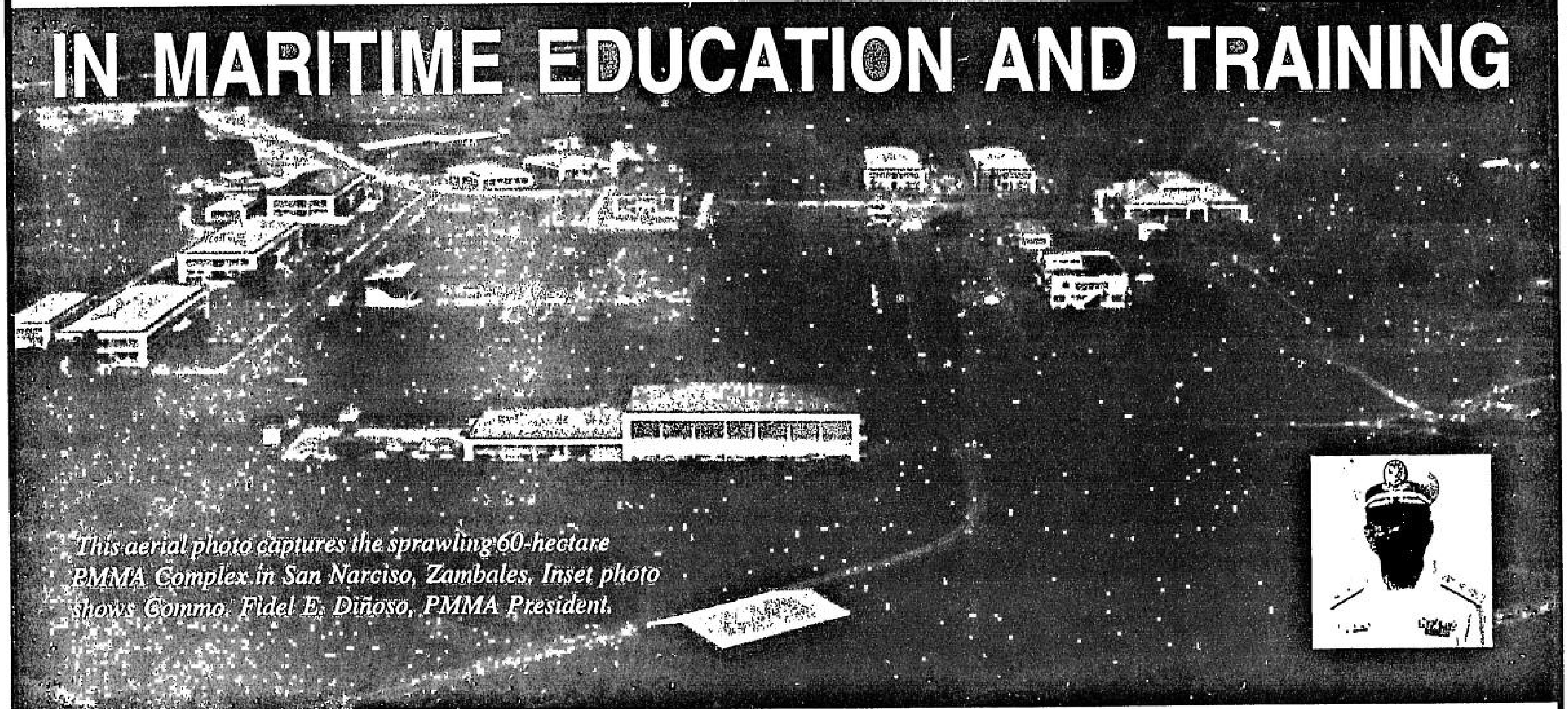

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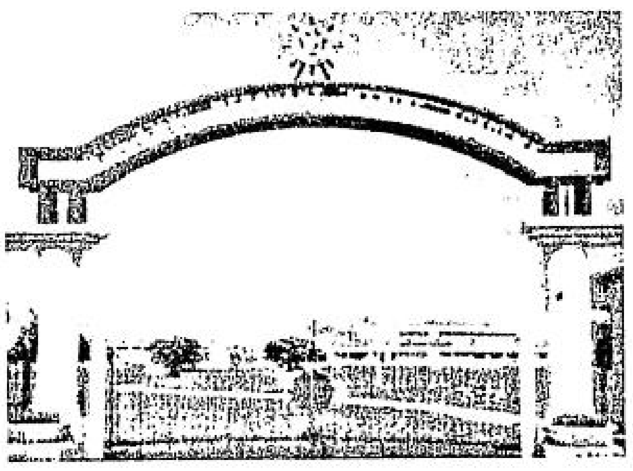

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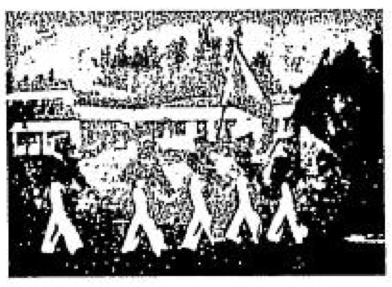

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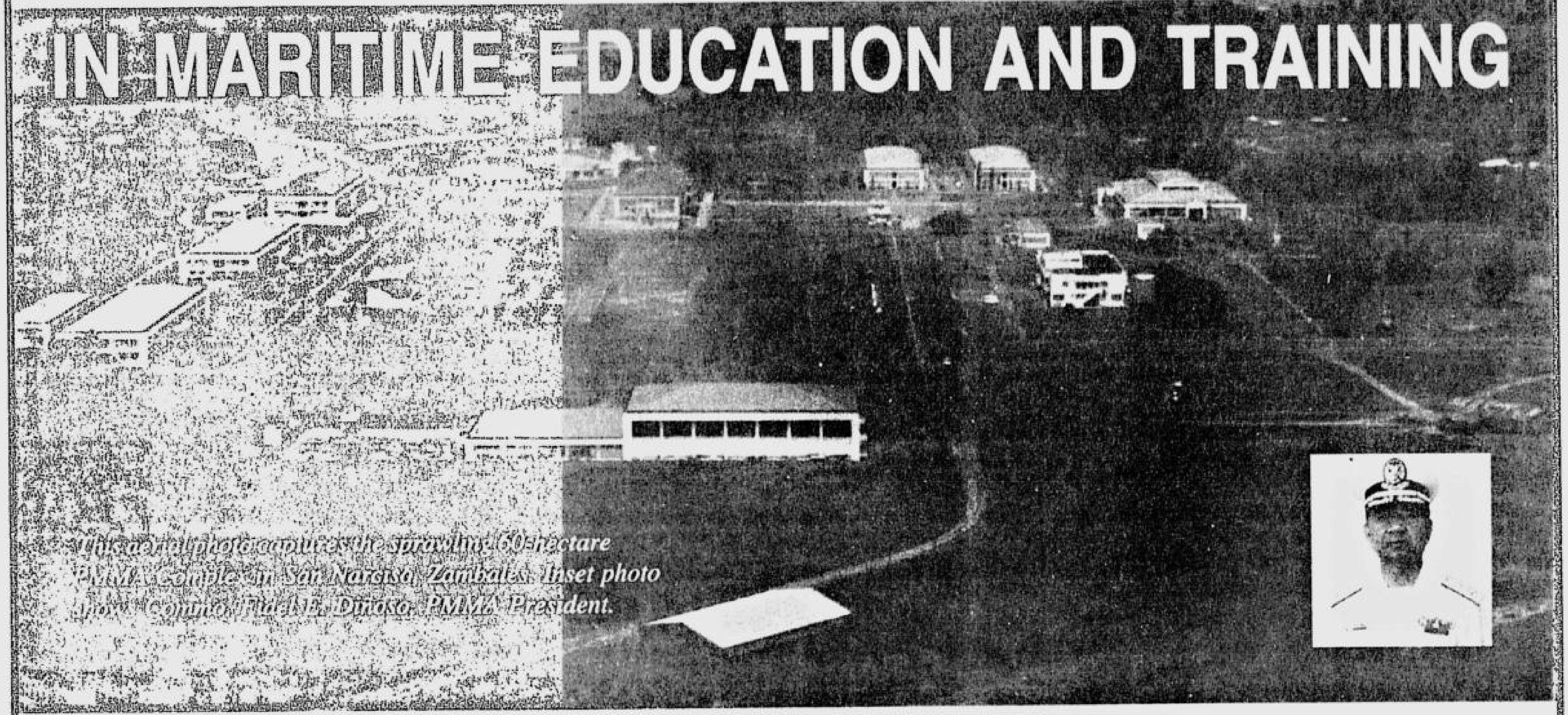

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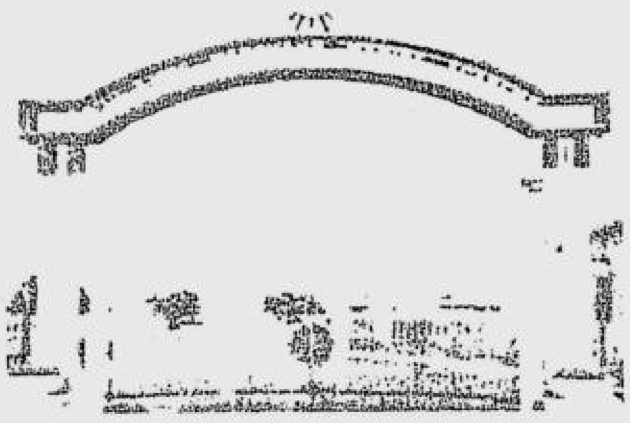

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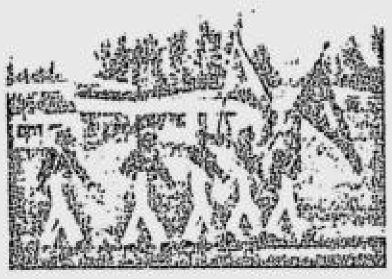

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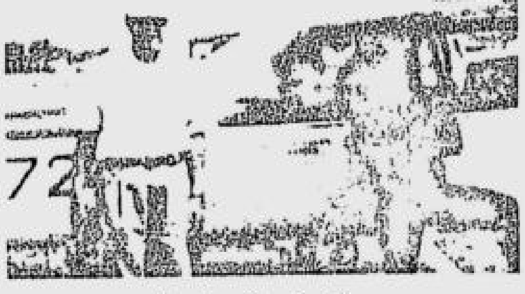

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GMA now leads FPJ, says latest survey

From page A1

February (8 percent)," Pulse Asia said.

Ms Macapagal's campaign aides were elated by the results of the survey.

"*Panalo na* (We'll win)," was the first reaction of Gabriel Claudio, campaign manager of the administration K-4 coalition.

But he said the President's campaign team would not be "lulled into complacency and will simply work harder to achieve a wider margin.

"From all indications, we will be able to get a comfortable margin when we go to the polls on May 10. Looking at the awesome organizational structure of K-4, I think you have a winner in the President," Claudio said in a phone interview.

He said a "lot of political movements in our direction" would happen as the campaign approached the homestretch.

"And with the disarray and confusion in the camp of FPJ, it's getting dimmer and dimmer for the opposition. Imagine, they are retooling their campaign machinery and replacing their campaign manager this late. If this is not trouble, I don't know what is," Claudio said.

Not bothered

But the Poe-led Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino was not bothered at all by the results of the survey.

Sen. Vicente Sotto, Poe's adviser, reiterated that the KNP had lost confidence in the methods used by Pulse Asia and its rival, the Social Weather Stations, in gleaning whom voters would pick from among the presidential candidates.

Sotto said the opposition had received information over a month ago that the two survey groups had been infiltrated by the administration camp. "The GMA camp knows when and where and what time the surveys would take place," he said.

Results of the survey showed that Ms Macapagal's rating rose to 34 percent from 33 percent in January and 32 percent in February. Poe's latest rating was lower than the 32 percent he got in February and the 35 percent he obtained in January.

Ms Macapagal and Poe were in a statistical tie in January and February because the surveys had a margin of error of plus or minus 2.3 percentage points.

GMA gains in Metro Manila

Between February and March, electoral support for Ms Macapagal increased by 6 percentage points in Metro Manila and by 11 percentage points in the Visayas. It remained steady in other areas and in all socio-economic classes.

The previous survey showed Ms Macapagal trailing Poe in vote-rich Metro Manila and in the poorest social class E.

In the latest Pulse Asia survey, electoral support for Poe in Metro Manila dropped by 5 percentage points but increased by 11 percentage points in Mindanao.

Ms Macapagal got 28 percent in Metro Manila and Poe, 27 percent. Lacson got 17 percent; Roco, 16 percent, and Villanueva, 3 percent.

The rest of Luzon went for Poe, who got 32 percent, while Ms Macapagal had 23 percent.

Mindanao for Poe

Ms Macapagal continued to get huge support from Visayans who gave her 56 percent of their votes. Poe got 20 percent. But Mindanao gave a "high level of support" for Poe, who got 42 percent compared with Ms Macapagal's 38 percent.

Pulse Asia noted that Poe got extensive support from the poorest Class E, 41 percent of whose members chose him. Ms Macapagal, a US-trained economist serving three years of deposed President Joseph Estrada's unfinished term, was chosen by 32 percent of the poor, whom she has been assiduously courting with housing, water, scholarships and other programs.

Ms Macapagal, however, was the clear choice of voters belonging to the Class ABC and Class D, who gave her 37 percent and 34 percent, respectively.

Poe, a high school dropout with no experience in public administration, got only 22 percent from Class ABC and 27 percent from Class D.

Pulse Asia said electoral support for Roco declined by 8 percentage points in the Visayas and Mindanao. It said support for Lacson was nearly constant between February and March across the country, except for a 4-percentage point drop in the poorest Class E.

Support for Villanueva remained the same around the country save for a 4-percentage point increase in Luzon.

Fictitious

Claudio said the President's camp expected the opposition to downplay and question the Pulse Asia survey, noting that the opposition was behind the "fictitious" report on the government's plan to cheat.

"Oplan Checkmate," he said, was pure fabrication.

"They are trying to preempt an imminent surge in the President's rating," Claudio said.

"There is a bandwagon of support for the President's candidacy," Cerge Remonde, media bureau chief of the President's campaign, said.

Remonde said the President was "pulling away" while her rivals' ratings were dropping.

As for the vice presidential race, Pulse Asia reported that while De Castro was ahead, his lead over Legarda had narrowed to 14 percentage points between February and March. De Castro had previously led Legarda by 21 percentage points.

The narrowing was due to a decline of 4 to 10 percentage points in De Castro's support in most of the country's geographic areas and socioeconomic groupings, according to Pulse Asia. De Castro gained 3 to 4 percentage points in Metro Manila and from Class ABC.

Pulse Asia said electoral support for Legarda went up by 4 to 6 percentage points in Luzon and in Mindanao and in Classes ABC and E.

Herminio Aquino, Roco's running mate, got 4 percent of the votes, while support for vice presidential candidate Rodolfo Pajo was "virtually nil." *With a report from Christine O. Avendaño*

Angara stays on in FPJ coalition, slams . . .

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"Now he wants to have a say on members of the coalition. It's so childish, so juvenile," Angara said.

He maintained that there was no need for unification: "We're already unified, and it's only Ping who's outside the circle."

He added: "How can the last in the surveys become standard-bearer, and the No. 1 in the polls slide to No. 2? Our candidate is serious. I don't know about this Lacson. He's just trying to get media mileage out of this."

LDP president

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The LDP is split into factions led by Angara and Aquino. Angara's faction, which forged the KNP coalition, is backing Poe, and Aquino's faction, Lacson.

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One of the men identified himself as the leader, "Ka Harry" of the NPA's Lucio de Guzman Command, who then berated Aranas for not paying the permit-to-campaign (PTC) fee.

The NPA has demanded that politicians campaigning in areas it controls pay the PTC. The government has condemned the practice and warned candidates not to comply.

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Aranas said he and Ka Harry then started their "one-on-one negotiation." He said the rebel leader initially asked for P300,000.

"I bluntly told him to order my release because I could not give him what he was asking for. That's too much. I then informed him that I would rather withdraw my candidacy than pay the PTC," he said.

During their negotiations in which the two were moving from one hut to another, Ka Harry was conferring with Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, spokesperson of the Communist Party of the Philippines, Aranas claimed.

Lower price

Aranas said the NPA leader then "lowered his asking price to P200,000," half of it to be paid by Monday morning and the other half after the elections.

"After all, he said, I would surely win," Aranas said.

After almost three hours, Aranas and his staff were allowed to go. But the rebels refused to release Reanzares, Rapadas and Javier.

Aranas said he still could not believe that the NPA would abduct "simple politicians like me ... I thought this was all in the movies."

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He assured all local politicians that the police and military were "ready and able to secure them from these local terrorists."

He said he had enough men to cover the island of Mindoro, long a hotbed of communist insurgency.

Since the official campaign period for the May 10 elections started last month, rebels on the island had intensified their offensives.

Suspected NPA guerrillas had twice attacked the administration's gubernatorial candidate, Rep. Josephine Ramirez-Sato, in Occidental Mindoro.

Mindoro had been the site of massive military activity in recent months. A number of human rights workers and activists were killed there recently, allegedly either by soldiers or local criminals.

In the wake of the Aranas abduction, Interior Secretary Jose Lina Jr. ordered the Philippine National Police to go after armed groups preying on local officials.

Lina explained that because of the nature of their functions, governors, mayors and other local elective officials were exposed to violence that sometimes threatened their lives.

He said all local executives should be extra careful and vigilant to prevent becoming victims of criminal violence. *With reports from Christian V. Esguerra, Alcuin Papa and Nelson Forte Flores*

Don't let Abu escapees leave Basilan, GMA orders

From page A1

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Philippine National Police spokesperson Chief Supt. Joel Goltiao said operatives hunting down the escapees had been ordered "not to go home until all inmates have been accounted for."

Chief Supt. Isnaji Bantala, police director of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, tried to allay concerns about the fugitives slipping to nearby islands, saying they were all "contained" in Basilan.

'We'll get them soon'

"The police and the military are hot on their trail, we'll get them soon," he said in a phone interview.

Bantala said the fugitives were dangerous, being armed with at least an M-203 grenade launcher, an M-16 rifle and a shotgun they had seized from jail guards.

It is also possible they may have gotten weapons from other civilians, a ranking PNP official said.

"Almost all residents there have guns," the official said.

As part of the security operation, six witnesses against the Abu Sayyaf fugitives had been transferred to Southcom headquarters in Zamboanga City, said Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero, chief of the AFP Public Information Office.

He said the witnesses were mostly wives of kidnap victims beheaded by the Abu Sayyaf.

The military is also securing points of entry to Zamboanga and the Davao provinces to prevent the fugitives from sneaking into those areas, AFP Vice Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Garcia told reporters.

The President's spokesperson, Ignacio Bunye, said the police and the military were confident of recapturing the escapees "in due time."

"Our government is determined to pursue the fight against terrorism and we have seen before this incident that the operation against the terrorists yielded positive results," Bunye said.

'No reproach from us'

He was referring to the recent killing of top Abu Sayyaf leader Hamsiraji Sali and the arrest of six Moro extremists suspected of planning to bomb malls, embassies and trains in Metro Manila.

Ms Macapagal, in a separate statement, dismissed a report by The New York Times that said Washington officials had reproached her during a meeting in Malacañang on March 22 for not doing enough in the antiterrorism war.

"Those who are talking about fictitious diplomatic reproaches or anything of the sort only want this partnership to fail and they are playing into the hands of terrorists," she said.

She said the Philippines remained a "strong strategic partner" of the US in the antiterrorism campaign and the alliance had led to "solid tactical gains."

US Charge d'Affaires Joseph Mussomeli said he and embassy staff gave an intelligence briefing to Ms Macapagal last month, hinting it led to the recent arrest of six Abu Sayyaf members in Metro Manila, Agence France Presse said.

Mussomeli said US officials sought an urgent intelligence briefing with the President on March 22.

"The thing that was unique perhaps is that the information that both the Philippines and American officials were gathering was extraordinarily high so there was urgency on both sides to talk and discuss and see what can be done," Mussomeli said on ANC television.

The United States Embassy yesterday said the meetings with Philippine officials regarding terrorist threats in the country were a "routine intelligence exchange."

"The US and other countries routinely exchange information on possible terrorist threats," an embassy statement said. "Such exchanges are an important tool in the ongoing war on terrorism. The Philippines is a staunch ally and partner in the global war on terrorism."

It said embassy officials and those from other foreign missions in Manila discussed "intelligence reports suggesting that terrorist cells were effectively planning attacks here."

Mussomeli denied in the television interview that Washington was dissatisfied with Ms Macapagal's handling of the antiterror campaign.

He said there had been concern on both sides "about terroristic activities and because of that there have been some serious exchanges of information and some serious discussions. But the use of terms like 'reproach' and 'reprimand' is silly." *With reports from Gil Cabacungan Jr., Alcuin Papa, Jerome Aning and Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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GMA now leads FPJ, says latest survey

From page A1

February (8 percent)," Pulse Asia said.

Ms Macapagal's campaign aides were elated by the results of the survey.

"*Panalo na* (We'll win)," was the first reaction of Gabriel Claudio, campaign manager of the administration K-4 coalition.

But he said the President's campaign team would not be "lulled into complacency and will simply work harder to achieve a wider margin.

"From all indications, we will be able to get a comfortable margin when we go to the polls on May 10. Looking at the awesome organizational structure of K-4, I think you have a winner in the President," Claudio said in a phone interview.

He said a "lot of political movements in our direction" would happen as the campaign approached the homestretch.

"And with the disarray and confusion in the camp of FPJ, it's getting dimmer and dimmer for the opposition. Imagine, they are retooling their campaign machinery and replacing their campaign manager this late. If this is not trouble, I don't know what is," Claudio said.

Not bothered

But the Poe-led Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino was not bothered at all by the results of the survey.

Sen. Vicente Sotto, Poe's adviser, reiterated that the KNP had lost confidence in the methods used by Pulse Asia and its rival, the Social Weather Stations, in gleaning whom voters would pick from among the presidential candidates.

Sotto said the opposition had received information over a month ago that the two survey groups had been infiltrated by the administration camp. "The GMA camp knows when and where and what time the surveys would take place," he said.

Results of the survey showed that Ms Macapagal's rating rose to 34 percent from 33 percent in January and 32 percent in February. Poe's latest rating was lower than the 32 percent he got in February and the 35 percent he obtained in January.

Ms Macapagal and Poe were in a statistical tie in January and February because the surveys had a margin of error of plus or minus 2.3 percentage points.

GMA gains in Metro Manila

Between February and March, electoral support for Ms Macapagal increased by 6 percentage points in Metro Manila and by 11 percentage points in the Visayas. It remained steady in other areas and in all socio-economic classes.

The previous survey showed Ms Macapagal trailing Poe in vote-rich Metro Manila and in the poorest social class E.

In the latest Pulse Asia survey, electoral support for Poe in Metro Manila dropped by 5 percentage points but increased by 11 percentage points in Mindanao.

Ms Macapagal got 28 percent in Metro Manila and Poe, 27 percent. Lacson got 17 percent; Roco, 16 percent, and Villanueva, 3 percent.

The rest of Luzon went for Poe, who got 32 percent, while Ms Macapagal had 23 percent.

Mindanao for Poe

Ms Macapagal continued to get huge support from Visayans who gave her 56 percent of their votes. Poe got 20 percent. But Mindanao gave a "high level of support" for Poe, who got 42 percent compared with Ms Macapagal's 38 percent.

Pulse Asia noted that Poe got extensive support from the poorest Class E, 41 percent of whose members chose him. Ms Macapagal, a US-trained economist serving three years of deposed President Joseph Estrada's unfinished term, was chosen by 32 percent of the poor, whom she has been assiduously courting with housing, water, scholarships and other programs.

Ms Macapagal, however, was the clear choice of voters belonging to the Class ABC and Class D, who gave her 37 percent and 34 percent, respectively.

Poe, a high school dropout with no experience in public administration, got only 22 percent from Class ABC and 27 percent from Class D.

Pulse Asia said electoral support for Roco declined by 8 percentage points in the Visayas and Mindanao. It said support for Lacson was nearly constant between February and March across the country, except for a 4-percentage point drop in the poorest Class E.

Support for Villanueva remained the same around the country save for a 4-percentage point increase in Luzon.

Fictitious

Claudio said the President's camp expected the opposition to downplay and question the Pulse Asia survey, noting that the opposition was behind the "fictitious" report on the government's plan to cheat.

"Oplan Checkmate," he said, was pure fabrication.

"They are trying to preempt an imminent surge in the President's rating," Claudio said.

"There is a bandwagon of support for the President's candidacy," Cerge Remonde, media bureau chief of the President's campaign, said.

Remonde said the President was "pulling away" while her rivals' ratings were dropping.

As for the vice presidential race, Pulse Asia reported that while De Castro was ahead, his lead over Legarda had narrowed to 14 percentage points between February and March. De Castro had previously led Legarda by 21 percentage points.

The narrowing was due to a decline of 4 to 10 percentage points in De Castro's support in most of the country's geographic areas and socioeconomic groupings, according to Pulse Asia. De Castro gained 3 to 4 percentage points in Metro Manila and from Class ABC.

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Herminio Aquino, Roco's running mate, got 4 percent of the votes, while support for vice presidential candidate Rodolfo Pajo was "virtually nil." *With a report from Christine O. Avendaño*

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He said he had enough men to cover the island of Mindoro, long a hotbed of communist insurgency.

Since the official campaign period for the May 10 elections started last month, rebels on the island had intensified their offensives.

Suspected NPA guerrillas had twice attacked the administration's gubernatorial candidate, Rep. Josephine Ramirez-Sato, in Occidental Mindoro.

Mindoro had been the site of massive military activity in recent months. A number of human rights workers and activists were killed there recently, allegedly either by soldiers or local criminals.

In the wake of the Aranas abduction, Interior Secretary Jose Lina Jr. ordered the Philippine National Police to go after armed groups preying on local officials.

Lina explained that because of the nature of their functions, governors, mayors and other local elective officials were exposed to violence that sometimes threatened their lives.

He said all local executives should be extra careful and vigilant to prevent becoming victims of criminal violence. *With reports from Christian V. Esguerra, Alcuin Papa and Nelson Forte Flores*

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SUPPORT THE TANDEM LEADERSHIP OF
FPJ and LOREN

It is innate in our culture that we Filipinos are a cooperative and helpful people. Through the "bayanihan" spirit, we have shown strength and fortitude in addressing insurmountable odds.

Past administrations have failed to move the country forward because of recurrent dysfunctional leadership brought about by a president and a vice-president coming from opposing political parties. With a disunited leadership at the top, government priorities and programs have been sidetracked by internal political bickering and backstabbing.

In the US electoral system, a vote for the President is also a vote for the Vice-President. This assures that the two top officials come from the same party, thereby lessening, if not eliminating, the possibility of discord in the top two Offices. This desirable concept, which has been tested and proven by time, does not exist in our electoral system. Since we have not followed this system, the voters tend to elect a President and a Vice-President from different political parties.

SAMAHANG WALANG IWANAN!

FPJ LOREN

We believe it is crucial for the stability and progress of our country that we persuade our people to elect a President and a Vice President from the same political party for the sake of unity in leadership and continuity in government policies, programs and thrusts.

The **FPJ - LOREN** tandem can bring about unity in leadership that can win back people's confidence and trust in their government. It is a tandem founded on credibility, integrity, honesty and cooperation and not on political convenience and horse-trading.

We believe that a ***Tandem Leadership*** is the better formula for good governance, and only the tandem of **FERNANDO POE, JR.** and **LOREN LEGARDA** can offer a way out of the crisis that plague Philippine society today.

*WE, THEREFORE, strongly urge the Filipino people to elect the tandem of **FERNANDO POE, JR.** for President and **LOREN LEGARDA** for Vice President in the May 10, 2004 national elections.*

DONE this 24th day of March 2004, Kalayaan Hall, Club Filipino, San Juan, Metro Manila

SIGNATORIES

SEN. LETICIA RAMOS SHAHANI

MAYOR JEJOMAR BINAY

MAYOR JOSEPH VICTOR "JV" EJERCITO

MS. ARMIDA SIGUION-REYNA

SEC. HORACIO "BOY" MORALES

CONG. MIGUEL L. ROMERO

ATTY. AQUILINO PIMENTEL III

MR. NIÑO MUHLACH

CONG. RANJIT SHAHANI

MR. RICHARD GOMEZ

ATTY. EDUARDO U. ESCUETA

MS. TONI LEVISTE

MR. CONRAD POE

ATTY. WILSON GAMBOA

ATTY. EMMANUEL OCAMPO

MR. REZ CORTEZ

BENJAMIN ESPIRITU, Ph.D.

MR. WILFORD WONG

MR. BOOTS CADSAWAN
Chairman
FPJPM

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Founder Chairwoman
EPW For FPJ

MS. MINERVA SEÑERES
Chairperson
OFW Family Club

MS. ADEL RAYMUNDO
Chairperson
WOMEN FOR FPJ

MR. JOHN KOCH
YOUTH FOR LOREN

MR. JOVI ZARATE
President
Batang Panday

MR. JAYGEE PUZON
President
YUPEE

MR. MANNY PORTES
Chairman
FPJM

MS. MARICRIS LIM
President
Unlad Lipunan

MR. EVANS PINO
AKBAY

MS. IMMACULADA MAURICIO
PMP Youth

MR. JOEY FAMULARCANO
TODO KAY FPJ/LOREN

MR. ANWAR RASUL
ASSALAM Muslim Party

MR. ROMMEL MENDOZA
Kabataang Malaya Para sa Bayan

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FPJ Volunteers Brigade

ADMN PABLO CASIMINA
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PMP NCR Volunteers

MS. HADJA TAHARA ANN BASMAN
President
United Mindanaoan

COMM. GIRLIE AMARILLO
KAMPIL

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LDP Youth

MR. JING ESPIRITU
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President
VP LOREN Youth

VOTE

FPJ for President - **LOREN** for Vice President

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LIM • MACEDA • MADRIGAL • PIMENTEL • RASUL • TATAD

Interested Applicants may write to FLAGG Secretariat c/o Michael Vincent M. Masiddo or Janice Maristela at 3/F Belson House, EDSA cor. Connecticut, Mandaluyong City
Call Tel. 724-7167 / 725-2419 / 725-2713 or Fax to 725-2394.
E-mail us at FLAGG_2004@hotmail.com
You can also clip this section and fax or mail it to the above contact information.

NAME: ____________________
ADDRESS: ____________________
Cell / Home / Office no: ____________________

I hereby commit to support the FPJ-LOREN Alliance for Good Government (FLAGG) in the attainment of its objective to promote a Tandem Leadership for our country founded on trust, integrity, honestyand competencethrough the election of the FPJ-LOREN tandem in the May 10, 2004 elections.

____
Signature

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Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

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(In exact order)
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1 3 4

MEGALOTTO 6/45
2 17 22 34 37 38

NBI seizes fake US notes worth billions

By Leila B. Salaverria

FAKE US Federal Reserve Notes worth billions of dollars have been seized from five individuals by National Bureau of Investigation agents over the Holy Week.

The NBI said the seized notes would be enough to pay off a sizeable portion of the national debt if they were real.

Arrested in separate operations in Manila and Antipolo, Rizal, were engineer Socrates Abella, 68; Pablo Gamboa, 53; Maximo Ginez, Zoilo Landrito, 58; and Estela Gonzales, 50.

Abella and Ginez, however, told reporters that the fake notes were just sold to them by a man whom they did not identify. They also denied being involved in the manufacture of the counterfeit notes.

Investigation by the Intelligence Special Operations Division headed by lawyer Oscar Embido revealed that the suspects were expected to deliver a large volume of fake US notes to prospective clients in Antipolo City over the Holy Week.

Acting on the said information, the agents conducted operations in Antipolo on Black Saturday and there arrested Abella and Gamboa. In follow up operations in Ermita, Manila, the NBI agents nabbed Ginez, Landrito and Gonzales.

Seized from the suspects were three fake coins worth $100 million each issued by the US Treasury, and over 100 pieces of Federal Reserve Notes worth $100 million each as well. Several pieces of negatives were also taken from the suspects.

The US Department of Treasury has issued certification showing that the confiscated notes were fake.

Embido said the confiscated notes are enough to pay off part of the country's debt, which, at the end of January 2004, stood at $28.816 billion or P1.67 trillion.

Supervising Agent Ely Tolentino also said that the counterfeit notes were being sold at P5 million each and most of their buyers were foreigners.

The five suspects have since been charged before the Manila Prosecutor's Office for forging and importing bank notes.

'Stinking' future for Metro seen

By Volt Contreras

POLITICS continue to prevent Metro Manila from reaching sustained, long-term approaches to solving its perennial garbage problem.

An official of the Asian Development Bank made this assessment yesterday as the ADB launched a book and website that warned of a stinking future for the capital unless local government units put more funds and will power on recycling efforts and sanitary landfill construction.

"(The LGUs) are responsive, yet at the same time, very hesitant to move on the solid waste problem," Richard Ondrik, ADB chief country officer, told reporters during the launch at the Edsa Shangrila hotel.

The issue, he said, remains "sensitive politically" since "nobody wants a dump site in their backyard."

In the newly launched publication aptly dubbed "The Garbage Book," an ADB-funded study noted: "The not-in-my-backyard (Nimby) phenomenon is hard at work in Metro Manila."

"Despite numerous efforts, no community has been willing to take Metro Manila's garbage," it added. An ADB survey of Metro households showed that 73 percent did not want to see a sanitary landfill in their community.

At present, the capital's 17 towns and cities rely on 10 "active" dump sites to absorb the 6,700 tons of trash it generates daily.

They are found at Pier 18 in Manila; Payatas, Quezon City; Rodriguez, Rizal; Bagumbong, Caloocan City; Lingunan, Valenzuela; Catmon, Malabon; Tanza, Navotas; Doña Petra, Marikina; Lupang Arenda, Taytay; and Pulang Lupa, Las Piñas.

But the ADB-funded book published for the DENR said these dumps have less than two years of disposal capacity.

"A widely held perception is that the crisis has subsided... This, unfortunately, is far from reality," it said.

Controlled dump sites should already be in place by 2006 under the Solid Waste Management Act, which President Macapagal-Arroyo signed in January 2001. And the existing open dump sites should begin closing down this year.

"The garbage crisis is real, serious, and poses even grave threats to public health if not resolved. The root causes of the problem are not technical or financial, but relate to governance and political will," the book stressed.

The ADB study provided other alarming facts:

- Despite the promotion of recycling since the 1970s, only 10 percent of the capital's daily garbage output gets recycled.
- The LGUs spend a total of P3.54 billion a year on waste collection, or P295 per resident, and yet these funds go to a disposal system that is hardly safe or sustainable.
- An estimated 150,000 residents deal with the "sight and smell" of garbage in open dumpsites as an integral part of their daily lives. Of this number, some 4,300 are dump site scavengers as young as 5 years old.

DENR Secretary Elisea Gozun stresses a point during the book launch.
RUDY ESPERAS

Pianist sues store over injured finger

By Tina Santos

A 59-YEAR-OLD pianist has filed charges against a department store in Quezon City for causing an injury on one of his fingers, which eventually cost his job abroad last year.

In his complaint, Jose Caruso Dequina, of K-8 Street, Quezon City, said he had to cancel his job in Korea because he couldn't use his hands to play the piano after one of his fingers was injured while he was shopping at the Isetan Department Store in Cubao.

Dequina filed charges of reckless imprudence resulting to slight physical injuries and violation of the Consumer Law before the Quezon City Prosecutor's Office.

The complainant claimed that the incident happened on July 25, 2003 inside one of the fitting rooms of the department store while he was about to try on some shirts.

Dequina said he was about to lock the door of the fitting room when his left hand pinkie was caught by "thin and very sharp edges of the bolt."

He said he failed to notice that the bolt-type lock was defective.

Medical records showed that the complainant suffered laceration on one of his fingers in his left hand.

As a result of the incident, Dequina said that he was unable to go back to Korea to work and his ticket was cancelled to his damage and prejudice.

New tickets make riding at LRT system easier

RIDING the mass rail has become easier as the Light Rail Transit Authority has stocked in their Purple Line Ticket vending machines stored value tickets.

LRTA administrator Pacifico M. Fajardo said this means that riders will now spend less time at terminals to buy their tickets and be in their destinations earlier than usual.

The tickets, yellow in color and known as SVTs, are valued at P100 each, which the passenger can use up to the last P1.

As this developed, Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza announced that the LRTA board of directors and the DOTC fare policy committee had approved the adjustment of train fees for the Purple Line.

"DOTC and LRTA had adjusted the fare rates, patterned after the distance-related fare scheme implemented by the LRT 1 last Dec. 15," Mendoza said.

6 cops in big trouble over illegal drive

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THIS is the standard police procedure: a police unit which will operate in a location outside its jurisdiction should first coordinate with the unit holding responsibility over the area.

Thus said National Capital Region Police Office spokesperson Bart Bustamante, as director Ricardo De Leon ordered the preventive suspension of the six Northern Police District policemen who allegedly carried an unauthorized operation in Pasig City last week.

Bustamante added that De Leon had ordered a "thorough investigation" of the incident.

On Thursday, six policemen from NPD Anti-Illegal Drugs Task Force blocked the car of trader Khalid Mac Mac, 48, on Market Avenue in Barangay Pinagbuhatan, Pasig City. But the trader refused to get off his car and called his friends who later arrived in the area.

WPD remains on high alert after Holy Week

THE WESTERN Police District will remain on high alert even after the Holy Week, according to director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong.

Bulaong, however, said the heightened alert is staying not because of the recent jailbreak in Basilan but as part of usual security measures against terrorist threats being observed in Manila.

Abu Sayyaf members were among the inmates who bolted from the Basilan jail over the Holy Week, although several of the Abu Sayyaf members have since been recaptured.

"Basilan is far from Manila," Bulaong said yesterday, adding all points of exit and entry in Basilan are already being watched.

Nevertheless, he said he would keep up police visibility and the guarding of critical establishments in the city in case other terrorist elements try to make a hit.

Among the establishments being guarded are the United States Embassy, the Pandacan oil depot, the Malacañang Palace, LRT stations, the Roxas Boulevard Baywalk, hotels and shopping malls.

Earlier, WPD operatives were also directed to monitor ice cream delivery vans and get in touch with ice cream companies after the WPD received intelligence reports that terrorists plan to put a bomb inside such a van. The van would reportedly be deployed in "critical areas" within Manila.

Downplayed

WPD spokesperson Chief Insp. Gerry Agunod yesterday downplayed the information about the delivery van, saying it was just intelligence information and not part of any concrete plan uncovered by authorities. But he said the police were checking out the information just to be sure.

Meanwhile, Bulaong also said he was happy about the generally peaceful situation in Manila over the Holy Week. No major crime incidents were reported in the city, he said. *Leila Salaverria*

Why Basilan officials ignored escape warning

On Target
Ramon Tulfo

EASTER Sunday, which was the other day, was supposed to be a day of rejoicing, but at the old Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) terminal building, arriving passengers thought it was still *Biyernes Santo* (Good Friday) because they were suffering.

While they were lining up at the immigration counter, passengers of Northwest flight from Los Angeles and Tokyo were sweating from the intense heat. The NAIA 1 air-conditioning system was not working.

From the springtime cold in the US and Japan, passengers were suddenly thrust into hellish heat, courtesy of the highly inefficient Manila International Airport Authority.

It seems the government doesn't care what foreigners and returning Filipinos think about the country because it doesn't make them feel at home upon arrival.

If MIAA officials don't know that NAIA 1 and NAIA 2 are the first show window to the Philippines, why, they should resign!

* * *

If recently appointed Immigration Commissioner Alipio F. Fernandez wants to help in projecting a good image for the country, he should visit NAIA 1 and NAIA 2 to check how immigration officers are doing behind the arrival counters.

I came from Tokyo and was on that Northwest flight. I noticed that there were not enough immigration officers to service the sudden influx of passengers disembarking from the plane.

Fernandez would be well advised to lessen his nightly drinking and seriously attend to his job. He should be reminded he is no longer a politician but a non-elective official holding a very important post.

* * *

I spent the Holy Week in Tokyo and I was very lucky to witness the beauty of the famous cherry blossoms in full bloom.

Cherry blossom trees, which are everywhere, even in urban Tokyo but abound mostly in rural Japan, display indescribable beauty when they're in bloom. The flowers, however, have a short span of existence. Two weeks after coming out, the flowers are gone.

Cherry blossoms are in bloom only in springtime, from April to June.

* * *

Japan is not a Christian country, so Tokyo and other places were not in a somber mood during the Holy Week.

Most young Japanese don't have a religion in a country where Buddhist and Shinto temples abound.

But every Japanese sees God, or his interpretation of the Deity, in the beauty of nature. That's why the Japanese take care of their environment, especially their trees and, of course, the cherry tree.

* * *

Why did local officials in Basilan ignore the warning of the military about an impending jailbreak at the provincial jail?

Like other provincial jails in the country, Basilan jail is under the supervision of the provincial government. City and town jails are managed by the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology under the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG).

So, that was the reason the military issued the warning to the Basilan provincial officials.

But why was the military warning not heeded?

The answer is simple: the Abu Sayyaf detainees were in close contact with some officials at the provincial government.

Most Basilan provincial officials are Muslims, and so are all Abu Sayyaf members. It's easy for a Muslim to side with a fellow Muslim, especially when the controversy is about religion. The Abu Sayyaf is seeking to make the whole of Mindanao an Islamic state.

* * *

Provincial jail warden Jumadil Sali said 11 of the 53 escapees had been recaptured and eight others killed.

Now, let's ask Sali if those recaptured or killed were Abu Sayyaf detainees who took part in the mass escape.

Then comes Gov. Wahab Akbar saying that he has issued a shoot-to-kill order for the escapees. Probably, the order covers only the escapees who are not members of the Abu Sayyaf.

The governor knows that the Abu Sayyaf detainees who escaped are now beyond the reach of the authorities since they're now hiding in their jungle lair. Despite being burdened with numerous hostages, the Abu Sayyaf successfully played hide and seek with the military in the jungles of Basilan.

You know where they were captured? In the lowlands while enjoying the ransom money paid for their erstwhile hostages.

Now that the Abu Sayyaf detainees have escaped from jail, they can't be recaptured so long as they are in their jungle habitat.

MetroBriefs

Man dies in fire

A 35-YEAR-OLD man was burned to death when a fire broke out inside his rented house in Makati City yesterday morning. Firemen found Michael Sartou of 1635 D. Benito St., Barangay Kasilawan, lying beside the door with third degree burns on his body. Makati fire chief Supt. Arsenio Tabajonda said the fire began at 9:55 a.m. which spread throughout the house owned by barangay kagawad Ferdinand Lontoc. Sartou, who rented a room in Lontoc's house, died when he tried to salvage his belongings from the burning house. *Margaux Ortiz*

Fireman injured

A VOLUNTEER firefighter was injured and more than P600,000 worth of property was lost in a fire that hit a plastics factory in Caloocan City early yesterday. The fire which hit Paramount Vinyl Plastics on De Jesus Street, 12th Avenue, Grace Park, began at 3:44 a.m., city fire station radio officer FO3 Elmer Ababa said. Initial investigations revealed that the fire started in the factory's second floor because of an electrical problem, case investigator SFO3 Randy Resurreccion said in his report. Volunteer firefighter Mariano Rivera suffered wounds on his left arm. The fire was put out by 5 a.m. *Edson Tandoc Jr.*

SWAT man killed

A MEMBER of the Southern Police District Special Weapons and Tactics team died in a motorcycle accident in Parañaque City early yesterday morning. PO1 Rolando Padojinog Jr., 31, of Doña Paz, Pulang Lupa, Las Piñas was on his way home at around 12:30 a.m. when he lost control of his motorcycle along Dr. Santos Avenue in Barangay San Dionisio. Padojinog then crashed into a center island steel railing in front of SM Sucat and died on the spot, according to case investigator PO3 Jose Adducul. *Margaux Ortiz*

New arrest order

A PASIG City court has issued a new arrest warrant against Angelo "Ador" Mawanay, the discredited whistleblower in the drug case against Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson, after he reneged on his promise—again—to attend trial. Mawanay is charged with three counts of estafa for allegedly duping Garlando Caparpos, Anthony Margarico and Manuela Azuela into giving him a total of P76,000 in 1997. Judge Celso Lavina of Branch 71 reset the trial on May 14 due to Mawanay's no-show. *Luige del Puerto*

QC cop station blast kills driver

A GRENADE, which was temporarily placed inside a comfort room for safekeeping, accidentally exploded inside the Central Police District Office Headquarters Sunday night, killing one person.

The victim, identified as Leon Ismael Dulce, 34, a driver from Murphy, Cubao, suffered severe head and body injuries. He died after a few hours of confinement at the East Avenue Medical Center.

Dulce was the driver of CPD-District Intelligence and Investigation Unit (CPD-DIID) chief, Supt. Franklin Mabanag.

The explosion occurred at 10:15 p.m. inside the male comfort room at the third floor of the CPD Headquarters main building in Camp Karingal, Sikatuna Village.

CPD director Chief Supt. Napoleon Castro immediately ruled out the possibility that the explosion was an act of terrorism, saying the grenade was put inside the comfort room for temporary safekeeping. *Tina Santos*

RIVER TOUR BRIEFING
Michael Lindfield (right), Asian Development Bank Senior Housing Finance Specialist, briefs European ambassadors on the ADB's Environmental Management and Rehabilitation Project for Pasig River. Those who joined the tour and briefing held recently were the ambassadors from Switzerland, France, Italy, Belgium and Portugal.

Angat water level reaches critical point

By Tina Santos

PRAY hard that rains will come as early as next month.

This was the appeal of Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System deputy administrator Macra Cruz to the public as the water level at Angat Dam reaches its critical point.

As of yesterday afternoon, the dam's level was pegged at 180.15 meters, about .2 meters above the forecast projection, and is expected to fall past the critical 180 meters within hours, Cruz said.

"Let's all pray that it will rain earlier than expected, preferably in May," Cruz said, adding that forecasters have already projected that rains will not yet come until June or July.

Cruz also disclosed that starting today, water allocation for irrigation in Central Luzon farmlands, particularly in Bulacan and Pampanga, will be totally cut.

Angat Dam supplies water not only to the surrounding farmlands but to Metro Manila households as well. When the water supply becomes critical, the government determines who needs it most.

"But they would have no problem for now because it's harvest season and during such time, farmers don't need much water. In fact, they even drain excess water," Cruz said.

She also noted that the water drop this year was faster than usual.

But she assured Metro Manila residents that there will be no additional cutbacks in the water supply to households, saying the water supply will remain steady.

Earlier, the supply to Metro Manila households was reduced by 5 percent.

This thief keeps returning to his crime scenes

By Luige del Puerto

THIS robber keeps returning to the scenes of his crimes, and his victims help him get away with it.

Celino Mamuco is number one on the list of robbery suspects in Marikina City.

His photograph is prominently posted in the policemen's rogue gallery, and he has served a three month term at the city jail.

But after his victim failed to appear in court three times after pressing charges, the court was forced to drop the case against him. So Namuco is back on the streets plying his trade.

Latest victim

And his latest victim was this reporter.

Having been a reporter for more than three years, I thought I knew my robbers well. I did everything I could to avoid them, getting off a jeep or an FX taxi whenever my instinct told me something was amiss. But things don't always work out that way.

One bright, sunny Sunday afternoon, my fiancée and I left Marikina City at 4:30 p.m. bound for Cubao on board an FX taxi, our regular mode of transport, at SSS Village. We sat on the second row, next to the left window.

Upon reaching E. Rodriguez Avenue in Barangay Sto. Nino, two well-dressed men boarded the taxi. One of them, about 5'7" tall, wore a light brown polo barong and brown pants. He sported a military cut. His companion wore a black shirt and denim shorts.

They calmly declared a holdup after we passed a police community precinct on A. Bonifacio Avenue in Barangay Barangka, just before the UP jeepney terminal. They could have not picked a better place—a 50-meter strip that is usually deserted at that time of day.

It was all over in three minutes. The taller suspect, brandishing a 38mm caliber revolver, while the other robber a fan knife, asked for our mobile phones and wallets.

HE ! HE ! HE !
SA UULITIN !

My heart flip-flopped when I saw the gun, afraid they might hurt the woman I would marry very soon.

We handed over our mobile phones readily, knowing that resisting was not worth it.

The robbers also took a male passenger's wrist watch, and my P100 bill (I had no wallet), then told the driver to move along after alighting from the vehicle.

At the Marikina police station, I was able to identify the man with the gun in a photo gallery at the police station. Mamuco, a native of Batangas province, was arrested on Sept. 11, 2003 after robbing a jeepney passenger also in Marikina City.

He stayed for three months at the city jail. On Dec. 2, 2003, the court dismissed his case provisionally after his victim failed to appear in court three times.

Sr. Supt. Felipe Rojas said this happens all the time. "All our efforts are wasted because the suspects are eventually released," Rojas said. "We always urge the victims to pursue the case. The prosecutors said there is nothing they could do since they have rules to follow."

The Marikina police have a list of at least 29 robbery suspects who have been freed because the victims had lost interest in the cases.

What have I learned from the experience?

For one, you cannot really tell if the decent-looking guy next you is about to rob you.

Tanong ng Bayan
NO NO TV TV
Ngayong Alas-10 Ng Gabi

Malikhaing Pinoy: World-class pa rin ba?

Ang mga world-class na artists at creatives na Pinoy ay nagsisilbing inspirasyon sa ating lahat. **Sa panahon ng abala at pangamba, sila ang nagdadala ng pag-asa.** Mamayang alas-10 ng gabi, sa ABC. (May replay bukas, alas-8 ng umaga.)

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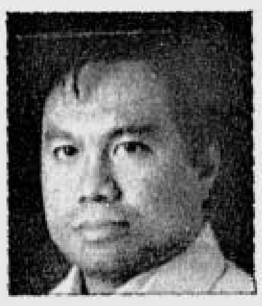

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68th Masters: Final round scores

279—Phil Mickelson 72-69-69-69; 280—Ernie Els 70-72-71-67; 282—K.J.Choi 71-70-72-69; 285—Sergio Garcia 72-72-75-66, Bernhard Langer 71-73-69-72; 286—Vijay Singh) 75-73-69-69, Fred Couples 73-69-74-70, Davis Love III 75-67-74-70, Nick Price 72-73-71-70, Kirk Triplett 71-74-69-72, Paul Casey 75-69-68-74, Chris DiMarco 69-73-68-76; 288—Casey Wittenberg (am) 76-72-71-69, Charles Howell III 71-71-76-70, Retief Goosen 75-73-70-70, Padraig Harrington 74-74-68-72; 289—Steve Flesch 76-67-77-69, Stephen Leaney (Australia) 76-71-73-69, Jay Haas 69-75-72-73, Stewart Cink 74-73-69-73, Fredrik Jacobson (Sweden) 74-74-67-74. *Reuters*

TUESDAY,
APRIL 13, 2004

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SPORTS

A21

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Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres
Assistant Editor Edwin M. Villanueva

May blue tamper proof seal ang tunay
GASUL

Fabulous Phil finally takes his first 'major'

Dramatic last-hole birdie foils Els at Masters

AUGUSTA, Georgia—Phil Mickelson's agonizing pursuit of a major ended at the Masters when he made an 18-foot birdie putt on the final hole, a spectacular conclusion to a back-nine duel with Ernie Els.

Gone is that ugly streak of being 0-for-42 in golf's biggest events. Gone are questions about Mickelson's game and whether it could stand up to the scrutiny of a major championship.

He delivered a command performance to the very end, with two birdies on the final three holes for a 3-under 69 that gave him a one-stroke victory over Els on Sunday.

The putt curled into the back of the hole, setting off an enormous roar. Mickelson jumped and thrust his fists, then kissed his ball when he plucked it from the cup.

"Oh my God!" he said as he walked off the green and into the arms of his wife and three children.

Until Sunday, he was known as the best player to have never won a major.

Now, he's simply one of the best in the game.

His awesome skills were on full display along the back nine at Augusta National, and they had to be. Els was flawless, making two eagles in his round of 67 that looked as though it would be enough to get the green jacket he covets, and the third leg of the Grand Slam.

But Mickelson was more determined than ever.

He rattled off three straight birdies to stay in range, caught Els with a 15-foot birdie on No. 16 and then had the stage to himself on No. 18.

Despite a half-dozen close calls in the majors, Mickelson had never come to the final hole with a share of the lead. He never had the final say.

On this day, he refused to let his chance get away.

He smartly played 3-wood off the tee to avoid the bunkers and hit his approach behind the hole. Mickelson got a huge break when Chris DiMarco blasted out of a greenside bunker and just beyond Mickelson's ball marker, giving him the line on the biggest putt of his life.

"I just couldn't believe that the ball fell in there," Mickelson said.

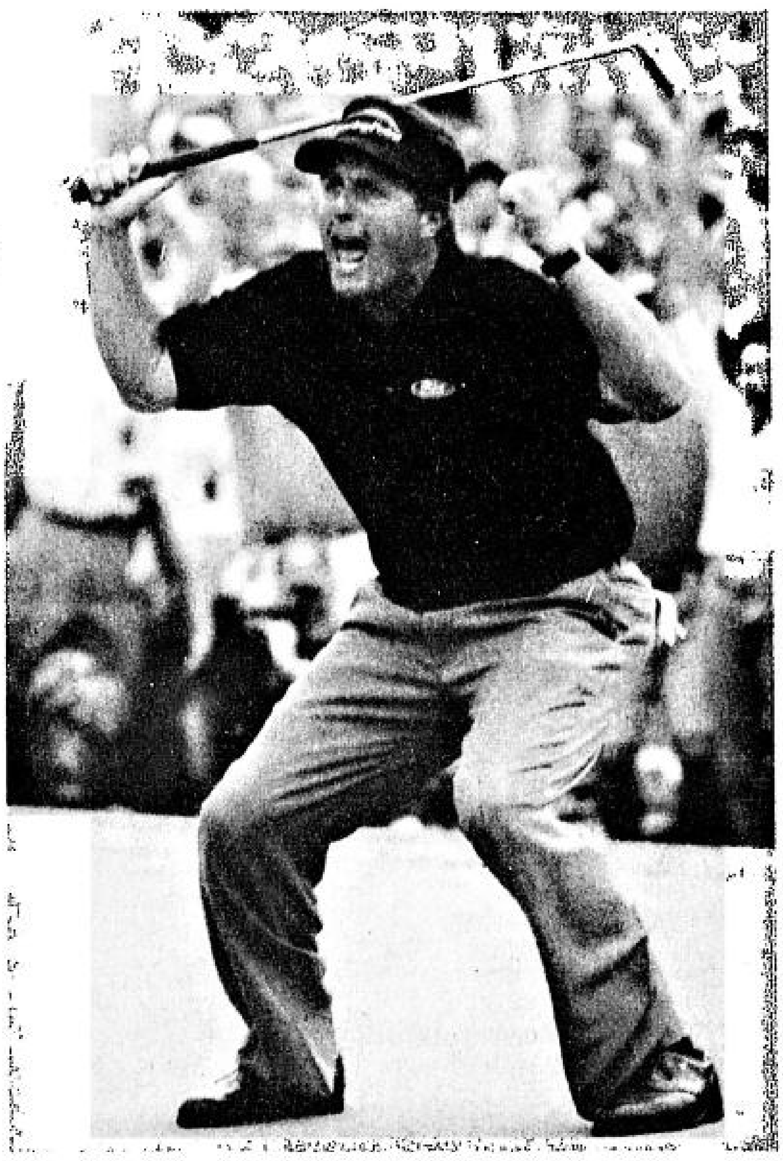
Before walking into the scoring hut to sign his card, Mickelson held daughter Amanda and said, "Daddy won. Can you believe it?"

Mickelson, who shot a 31 on the back, finished at 9-under 279. Mike Weir, whose victory last year made him the first southpaw to win the Masters, slipped the green jacket on the most famous Lefty in golf.

It was a bitter end for Els, who now knows how Mickelson has felt all these years. The big South African did nothing wrong over the final 12 holes, salvaged four crucial pars along the way and it still wasn't enough.

"I think Phil deserved this one," Els said. "He won this one. He didn't lose it like some of his other ones. Full credit to him."

FABULOUS/ A22


MICKELSON whoops it up after his title-clinching birdie. REUTERS

Tiger's bum stomach; Choi's eagle eye

AUGUSTA, Georgia—For the second straight year, the world's best player was barely a factor in the Masters.

Tiger Woods' final-round 71 on Sunday left him 8-over for the tournament and in 22nd place, four spots lower than his previous worst finish in eight appearances. He's now winless in seven straight majors.

To add injury to insult, Woods battled a stomach flu after eating something that disagreed with him.

"I was feeling cold, hot, hot, cold. I'd put on a sweater and next thing I know, I was hot," Woods said.

He'd love to be able to say the same about his inconsistent play.

Next for Woods: a trip to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where he'll spend four days of training. Woods' father, Earl, trained at Fort Bragg in 1963 following a tour in Vietnam.

"Fort Bragg is more of a mental test for me," Woods said.

* **

LONG-DISTANCE: Describing K.J. Choi's 5-iron into the 11th green as "eagle-eyed" isn't much of an exaggeration. From 220 yards away, his second shot landed on the green, bounced several times and then had no trouble finding the cup.

"If it didn't hit the hole, it's in the water," which extends to the back of the green, said Choi, who became just the third player in history to make eagle on the 11th hole, but wound up third.

* **

GOING LOW: Nobody can say they had a better finish at the Masters than amateur Casey Wittenberg.

The 19-year-old made three birdies and an eagle over the last six holes, shooting 31 on the back Sunday to finish 13th. More importantly, he earned a trip to Augusta National next year.

Wittenberg finished at even-par 288, the best score by an amateur since Charlie Coe in 1962.

* **

PAIR OF ACES: Padraig Harrington and Kirk Triplett made in 10 minutes what only seven other golfers did in the 67 previous years at the Masters.

Playing in back-to-back groups, Harrington and Triplett each aced the 16th hole Sunday afternoon. They were the eighth and ninth aces on the 170-yard hole, and the first since Raymond Floyd's in 1996.

"I was delighted," Harrington said.

"Just laying on the hallowed ground —I couldn't believe it," Triplett said. *AP*

Guidicelli caps big RP kart feat in Malaysia

Guidicelli: Anything but easy

KELANTAN, Malaysia—The Philippines' Matteo Guidicelli of Team CRG-Cebu swept all his five races to rule the Royal Kelantan Silver Jubilee Kart Prix, kickoff leg of the Asian Zone Open Karting Championship, at the Kota Bahru Circuit here.

Guidicelli clinched the premier Intercontinental Junior Championship crown, capping an impressive victory for the Philippine Karting Team which bagged three of the six titles at stake.

Last year's champion, Michelle Bumgarner of M&M Racing, topped the Open Class and Marcel Thenu won the Veterans 125 event to round out the Philippines' big effort.

But the victory was anything but easy for the Filipino-Italian Guidicelli who overcame mechanical problems to show up Southeast Asia's best karters.

After topping the pre-final heat race with the fastest laptime of 47.79, the front nose cone of Guidicelli's kart broke in the third lap of the centerpiece race. It caused further damage when the cone hit the metal frame of his brake and broke it, forcing him to slow down.

Malaysian Jazeman Firhamin saw Guidicelli's problems and tried to seize the lead, but the prodigious 14-year-old RP racer's defensive driving pulled him through at the end of the 25-lap race.

Karter of the Year Bumgarner, starting third in the grid in the final heat behind Indonesians Zahir Ali and Imran Zaharias, ruled her race with a touch of luck and loads of exceptional driving.

After clocking the fastest laptime of 47.551 in the second lap, Bumgarner finally moved up to second place when Ali spun out in the eighth lap.

With seven laps to go, Bumgarner pulled off a brilliant passing maneuver to snatch the lead for good from Zaharias.

Thenu seized the lead in the first lap and never looked back in dominating the Veterans 125 class.

Tampus stakes Paba crown vs tough Indon

FILIPINO Marvin "Leyte Bomber" Tampus defends his Pan Asian Boxing Association junior flyweight title for the third time today against unbeaten Indonesian mandatory challenger Vicky Tahumil in Jakarta.

Tampus (11-1-1, 8 KOs), fighting out of Liloan, Cebu's Stonewall Boxing Gym, won the Paba crown on May 23, 2002 with a seventh-round stoppage of then champion Deeden Kengkarun in Thailand.

"I have prepared hard for this fight. I will not allow Tahumil to take my belt away," said Tampus in an earlier interview.

The Filipino champ from Bato, Leyte, has been training in Indonesia the last four weeks together with stablemate OPBF minimumweight kingpin Rodel Mayol under trainer Carl Peñalosa Jr.

Tampus' manager, Joy Ouano, expressed confidence that his ward will be up to Tahumil's challenge. Ouano left for Indonesia yesterday.

The 20-year-old Tampus is currently ranked No. 4 in the WBA and No. 12 in the WBC 108-lb division. He is considered one of the country's premier prospects to win a world crown.

Tahumil is ranked Paba No. 2.

Salven L. Lagumbay, Contributor

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PBL doormats' turn today

ALL FOUR winless teams mix it up today at the resumption of the Philippine Basketball League 2nd Unity Cup at the Pasig Sports Center.

Newcomers Lee Pipes-Ateneo and Toyota Otis-Letran clash with luckless veterans Montaña Pawnshop and BluStar Detergent, respectively.

The Eagles, who lost their first two games to Sunkist-UST and Hapee Toothpaste, will go up against the Jewels at 2 p.m.

The Knights will square off with the Detergent Kings at 4 p.m.

Although beaten by Viva-FEU and Welcoat Paints, Toyota Otis coach Louie Alas said he is satisfied with the way his charges are playing, especially against the Paint Masters, who beat them by only seven points.

"I did not expect my players to play that kind of game. I was surprised that they can even display that kind of character," said Alas.

BluStar will bank on big men Erick dela Cuesta, Niño Canaleta and Jenkins Mesina while Toyota Otis is expected to go to guards Ronjay Enrile, Jonathan Aldave and Aaron Aban.

Expected to spearhead Lee Pipes are Larry Fonacier, LA Tenorio and JC Intal, core of the Ateneo's UAAP team.

The Jewels have a gem in former pro Jon-Dan Salvador, who has been keeping the team together after the departure of former main man Gary David, who is now with the Coca-Cola Tigers in the PBA. *Marc Anthony Reyes*

STANDINGS	W	L
Welcoat	3	0
Hapee	3	0
Viva-FEU	2	1
Sunkist	2	1
Lee Pipes	0	2
Montaña	0	2
BluStar	0	2
Toyota	0	2

GAMES TODAY
(*Pasig Sports Center*)
2 p.m.—Lee Pipes Ateneo vs Montaña
4 p.m.—Blustar vs Toyota-Otis

No Athens for divers, swimmers

By Marc Anthony Reyes

PHILIPPINE Sports Commission chair Eric Buhain yesterday lamented the plight of national swimmers and divers who have been trying their luck to qualify for the Athens Olympics in August.

Buhain, himself a former champion swimmer, said the swimmers and divers missed Olympic opportunities because of poor communication with the Philippine Amateur Swimming Association.

He said at least four swimmers are just a breath away from the Olympic B standards in their respective events.

Jenny Guerrero's 1 minute and 13 seconds in the 100-meter backstroke is just .01 slower than the Olympic standard. Rafael Chua, in the same event, has also posted a time of 1:05.2 as against the 1:05.0 Olympic cut.

Gem Ong (100m freestyle) and Benjie Uy (100m butterfly) are also close to making the required time, added Buhain, who dropped by the Rizal Aquatics Center yesterday to talk to the swimmers and their parents.

The PSC chief, however, was quick to say that the agency is not interfering in the Pasa affairs.

"We are just making sure the swimmers are clear on the directions they are taking (on the way to the Olympics)," said Buhain. "I will give everything to send them to Athens."

Buhain also noted that divers Shiela Mae Perez and Zardo Domenos failed to compete in an Olympic qualifying held in Athens last January due to visa problems.

Diving officials, however, blamed the delay due to the unavailability of funds from the PSC.

Growing family feud for Tigers, Beermen in PBA

THEY'RE supposed to be sister teams, but recent meetings between San Miguel Beer and Coca-Cola in the Philippine Basketball Association show they're fast becoming bitter rivals.

In just their second clash since the Tigers edged the Beermen in a rough and tumble best-of-seven series for the Reinforced Conference championship last year, players nearly came to blows at the end of Coca-Cola's streak-snapping 88-85 victory over San Miguel Sunday in the Gran Matador Fiesta Conference at the Araneta Coliseum.

"The next thing I knew, there was a lot of shoving and shouting," said Coca-Cola coach Chot Reyes of the post-game melee.

The principal characters in the fracas, who are expected to be slapped fines by commissioner Noli Eala, were Coke import Mark Sanford and San Miguel forward Nic Belasco.

Reyes said he saw Belasco go after Sanford to ignite the rhubarb.

Based on witnesses' accounts, this was what happened: As the players headed for the exit, there were a few words exchanged.

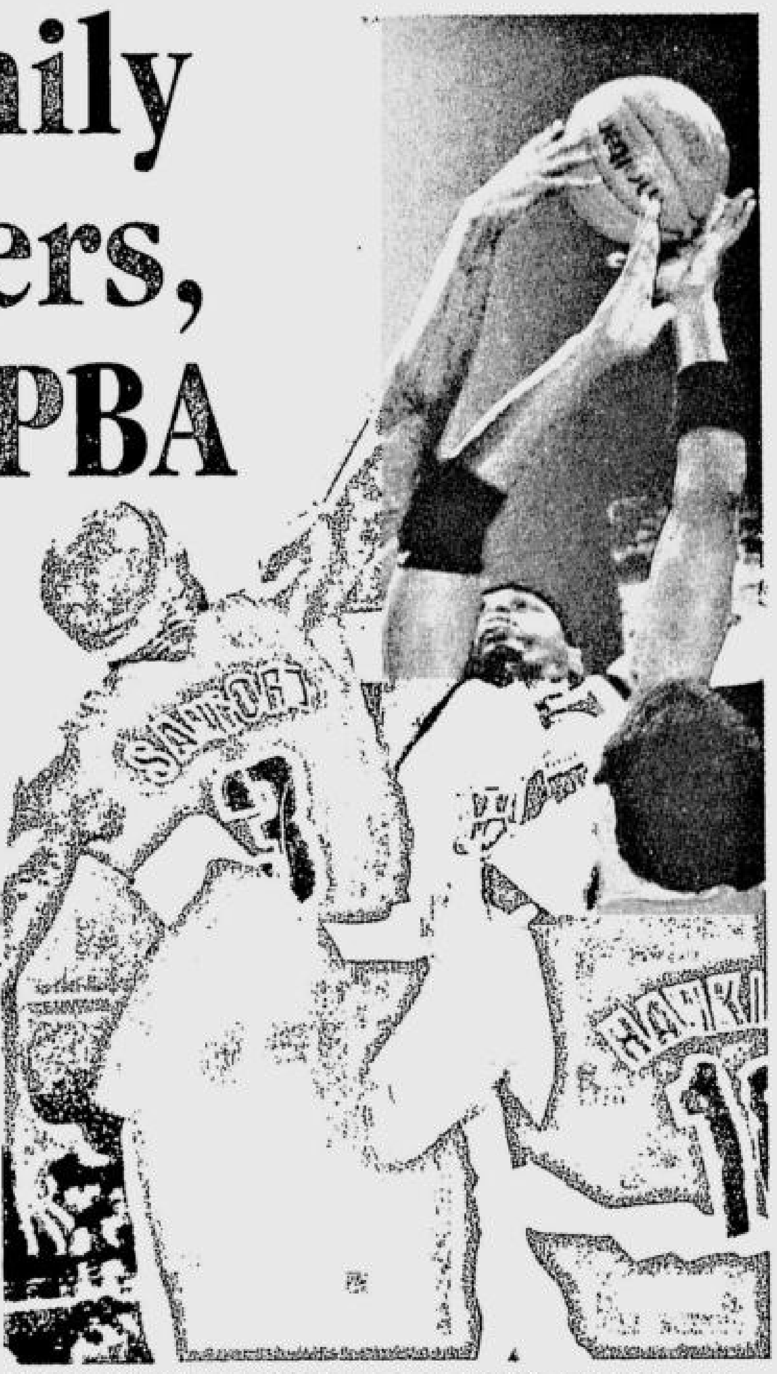
Apparently, Belasco didn't have the last say. Still hearing someone shouting, Belasco whirled around and approached Sanford.

The two got involved in a shoving match and were pulled apart by teammates, among them San Miguel import Art Long, who started pushing people away from Sanford and Belasco. However, Long inadvertently shoved Coca-Cola forward Bong Hawkins against the steel railing lining the coliseum exit.

Just when everyone thought everything was settled, Belasco crossed the railing separating both teams' locker rooms and went after Sanford again.

Last year, it was Ildefonso and Coke import Tee McClary who got involved in a physical altercation, giving rise to speculation of a brewing rivalry between the two clubs, which are both under the SMC flagship.

With a report from June Navarro



COCA-COLA'S Mark Sanford blocks a shot by SMB's Art Long as Bong Hawkins provide defensive support during the game Sunday. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Fabulous Phil finally takes his first 'major'

From page A21

K.J. Choi holed a 5-iron from 220 yards on the 11th hole for eagle, kept his hopes alive with a 40-foot birdie putt on the 13th but wound up with a 69, three shots behind.

Tiger Woods was long gone before the fireworks started. He made a double bogey—his third of the tournament—on the 13th hole and shot 71, leaving him 11 shots out of the lead in a tie for 22nd, his worst finish ever at the Masters.

But this Masters didn't need him to deliver the drama.

With aces and eagles, so many spectacular shots along the back nine that the gallery was out of breath, it came down to Mickelson and Els in a duel as good as any at a major championship.

Els, playing two groups ahead of Mickelson, beat him on the par 5s with an eagle and a birdie.

Mickelson answered with an approach to the dangerous 14th that grazed the cup for a tap-in birdie, and a 15-foot birdie on the par-3 16th, a hole that has haunted him in the past.

"Baby!" Mickelson said as he trotted off the green, tied for the lead with two holes to play.

Playing the final hole, Els hit into a bunker so deep he could only see the hazy sky. He blasted out and said, "Be right!" and it stopped some 25 feet behind the cup. His birdie putt turned just left of the hole.

Els was on the practice green, preparing for a playoff, when he heard the loudest roar of the day. Mickelson made the putt.

"Having it by such a tough quest, struggle, journey ... it feels that much better," Mickelson said. *AP*

'Can you believe it'

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

IN ALMOST every major in golf, the attendant drama to it is nerve-wracking. Spine-tingling. Heart-stopping.

The 68th Masters is no exception.

Phil Mickelson won it yesterday when he wasn't supposed to. Yet, when he sank the winning putt on his 72nd hole, the crowd at Augusta National—the most appreciative of all crowds in golf—let out an applause that was so thunderously deafening it reduced the eruption of the Krakatoa of Java to a mere whimper.

I'm not surprised.

Eight holes ago, Phil Mickelson looked every inch a loser of another major. He shot a front-nine 38 to surrender his overnight lead to Ernie Els.

Coming home, though, Phil Mickelson turned from generic to thoroughbred, from *askal* to pedigreed pet. He shot 31 for a 69—and a 1-shot victory over Ernie Els.

If one holding the lead going into the last round like Phil Mickelson cannot win it with a final 9 peppered with 5 birdies in a bogey-free trip for home, I think this isn't golf anymore but golf spelled backwards—f-l-o-g. Phil Mickelson ought to be flogged if he had blown it.

But he won it, and he deserved not only our ovation but also our admiration.

Here was a guy, struggling for so long to overcome his dubious tag as the best golfer who never won a major, finally emerging a winner.

And the fact he did it with aplomb, with so much scratching when all seemed lost yet again, makes him more of a winner than a champion.

With his victory, Phil Mickelson has recorded a first that is a delight to trivia collectors: he became the second southpaw to win it right after the year lefty Mike Weir (2003) of Canada won it.

And there's lots more.

Phil Mickelson has been known as the most bypassed one by the gods of golf. Going to this year's Masters, he was known as the most persistent title pretender who never quite made it for one reason or another.

In his first 47 majors, he was in the Top 3 eight times—four of which came in the Masters. He was known as the uncrowned majors champion.

He looked set to keep that tag yesterday after he lost the lead going out.

And then, as if on cue, the gods of the game suddenly had a change of heart. They gave Phil Mickelson his first major crown to add to his 22 previous championships.

Or did the gods suddenly decide to play tricks on us?

Look, how can Ernie Els lose to Phil Mickelson by one when the Big Easy from South Africa fired two eagles yesterday? That was one feat as uncommon as digging a diamond in a gold mine.

And how can one not think Ernie Els would win it when, after dumping his tee shot into the fairway bunker of 18, he planted his approach from 138 yards 18 feet past the cup?

And even if he two-putted from there, how can one not think he'd pull it out from the fire—if not, at the very least, earn a playoff—as he was one up on Phil Mickelson with a final-day 67?

Oh, well, now I know.

The gods of golf did play tricks—on Ernie Els.

For, on 16, Phil Mickelson—two flights behind Ernie Els—rammed home a delicate 18-foot birdie to snatch a share of the lead with Ernie Els at 8-under.

Ernie Els didn't see Phil Mickelson's tying putt but he knew it just the same. He got the message through the roar from the crowd that ringed the par-3 16th.

On 17, Phil Mickelson, who was down by 3 strokes at one point, had a downhill birdie putt that even a mere nudge might send the ball screeching past the cup like a train gone wayward. He did just that, the putter merely giving the ball a buzz—the gentlest flying kiss ever blown, if you wish. The ball stopped mercifully centimeters away from the hole for a tap-in.

Phil Mickelson drove a 303-yard 3-wood on the par-4, 465-yard 18th, greened it from 162 yards and next strode like a champion toward the finishing hole—a big smile on his lips.

As in No. 16, Ernie Els also didn't see Phil Mickelson's winning putt on 18. The South African was busy munching on a red apple when the lefty from San Diego, California, stroked home the 20th birdie of the tournament.

When it fell, the apple must have tasted rotten for Ernie Els.

It was only the fourth birdie that won the event since the Masters' birth in 1934—after the winning birdies of Arnold Palmer in 1960, Sandy Lyle in 1988 and Mark O'Meara in 1998.

When Phil Mickelson's winning birdie finally fell from some 15 feet away after half-circling the hole from the left rim, he jumped up high. Then he embraced his caddy of 12 years, Jim McKay, and next gave Chris DiMarco, the champion's flight mate, a tap on the shoulder as if telling him, "Thanks, buddy." DiMarco had putted first—his ball just inches behind where Mickelson's ball lay. Certainly, Mickelson had studied the path of DiMarco's putt—right center.

"Oh, man, can you believe it?" Phil Mickelson blurted out after he made the putt, a statement he would exclaim repeatedly to well- wishers that lined up his path as he headed to the scorer's tent.

I can believe that. Phil Mickelson was my pro during the Pro-Am of the World Match Play in Wentworth, England, in 1996.

Now, can you believe that, too?

SPORTSWATCH

Little League series starts with 36 games

TANAUAN CITY, Batangas—The Little League Philippine Series 2004 goes full blast today with 36 games scheduled at the Barangay Pagaspas field here. International Little League Association of the Philippines (Illam) will be busy defending four crowns in Little League Baseball and three in softball while Bacolod will try to keep its Little League softball title and later defend its World Series championship in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Some 800 participants marched through the city's streets yesterday before the opening ceremony attended by Nueva Ecija Gov. Tomas Joson III and Tanauan City Mayor Alfredo Corona. Teams in Little League baseball play one round robin, with the best two teams advancing to the knockout crossover semifinals.

Sportshouse's Basketball Fiesta

THE 2ND leg of Sportshouse's summer sports extravaganza at SM Malls will be in Lucena City in Quezon Province on April 14 and 15. Dubbed as "Basketball Fiesta" and co-sponsored by Burlington performance socks and Cherifer multivitamins, the SM Lucena event starts at noon with a free cage clinic to be conducted by coaches Fritz Gaston and Bong Go. It will be followed by the shootout challenge where exciting prizes are at stake. To join the clinic, which attracted 150 children during its launching at SM Mall, interested parties should only show a receipt of any Burlington or Sportshouse product at the registration corner.

Upsilonians golfest slated Friday

BAGUIO CITY—The fourth leg of the annual "Upsilonians Na Pumapalo" series will be played Friday at the Camp John Hay Golf Club here. This was bared yesterday by University of Baguio executive Leonides "Des" Bautista and fellow tournament hosts, lawyer Damy Bangaoet and businessman Kiting Villa. The annual series has Col. Abelardo "Be-Abs" Villanueva as chair emeritus and Alex Avisado as chair and president. "We expect about 50 Upsilonians to play," Bautista said.

Ateneo-Zambo alumni golf tourney

THE ATENEO de Zamboanga University Metro Manila Alumni Association "3rd Golf Classic 2004" blasts off on Friday at the Manila Golf and Country Club, Forbes Park, Makati City. Alumni president Paulino Pe said the tournament intends to raise funds to support Ateneo de Zamboanga faculty scholars in their advance studies at different universities in Metro Manila. Tee-off starts at 8 a.m. Interested parties are invited to join the 18-hole fund-raiser. For information, contact Jimmy Panganiban at 09189002159 or lawyer Domingo Doroja at 09175285560 and Fred Suarez at 09195865446.

Valley to host Tuason and Founders Cup

FIVE pricey cars and other special prices will go to lucky players, who will shoot holes-in-one in the fifth Don Celso Tuason and Founders Cup set April 22-25 at the Valley Golf and Country Club. GM Auto World is offering three cars and Suzuki Philippines and Nissan Commonwealth are staking one apiece at designated ace holes of the Executive and South courses. Other holes-in-one prizes are a round-trip ticket to Hong Kong from Philippine Airlines and P50,0000 each from Risk Profiles Insurance and CIGI General Insurance Corp. Tournament chair Francisco "Popoy" del Rosario said 298 teams made up of club members and guests have signed up.

NCA 7-cock derby at Araneta

MORE than 60 fights are lined up today when big-time cockfighting returns at the Araneta Coliseum via the "National Cockers Association 7-Cock Derby." Derby hosts are Ucap president Raymond Velayo and hotelier-sportsman Biboy Enriquez. Competing are Ucap and NCA members and guest participants like Mayor Ashley Arayata, Jun Topacio, Jake and Butch Macasaet, lawyer Gildo Capucchino, Peping Ricafort, K. Chua of Iloilo, Tony Lasala, Patrick Antonio, Benjie Lim, Ram Lopez, Sonny Lagon, Boy de Roca, James and Philip Chiongbian and Lito Onllaza. For inquiries, call 911-3101 or 911-2928.

BOWLING CHAMPS: The GMA 7 bowling team ruled Division I of the SMC Broadcasters Invitational Bowling Tournament recently. Awarding the championship trophy is Mon Santiago (fifth from left), SMC AVP, External Affairs with Mary Jane Llanes-Francisco (fourth from left), SMC media relations manager, and Serge Alombro (left), SMC media officer. Spearheading the champions are Dexter Mercado (middle), GMA VP, Human Resources, and Butch Raquel (right), GMA head, Corporate Communications.

Samsung Jungolf Tour second leg under way

BAGUIO—Former world champion Dottie Ardina, Junro Mamaril, Cyna Rodriguez and three others seek their second straight victories when the Samsung-DHL Philippine Junior Golf Tour moves out of town for the second leg at the Camp John Hay Golf Club course starting today.

Unchallenged in the opening leg two weeks ago in Canlubang, the 10-year-old Ardina is out to make another strong impact in a superbly conditioned course she considers among her favorites as the US Kids World titlist heads a cast of 80 players vying in six age-groups.

Mamaril, the surprise winner in Class B (13-14 years), and girls' Class C titlist Rodriguez are solid favorites with the absence of their top rivals. The runaway winners in the six years-and-under division, Janella Buen and Justin Dy, are also in the field.

Samsung Electronics and DHL are supporting the circuit organized by the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines along with Philippine Airlines, which is also the official carrier, and the International Container Terminal Services Inc. The other sponsors are GONADS and Unilever.

Kim Chang-Hoi, the Korean who came from behind to win Class A in the Canlubang leg, is also set to gun for win No. 2.

The other trophy winners in the opening leg have decided to stay in Manila due to school commitments and also to prepare for next week's qualifier for the Callaway Junior world golf championships at Sherwood Hills.

The Superal siblings—Wolen, Crystal Faith and Princess—who pulled off a rare family sweep two weeks ago, quit at the last minute.

DAVIS CUP

US meets Belarus in semis

RODDICK slams his record-breaking serve against Bjorkman. EPA

LONDON—Andy Roddick led the United States past Sweden and into a Davis Cup semifinal against newcomer Belarus, while France and Spain set up a meeting between past champions.

Roddick hit a record 152-mph (244.6-kph) ace on the final point of his straight-set victory over Jonas Bjorkman, which gave the Americans a 3-1 edge in the best-of-five series on hard courts. Mardy Fish made the final score 4-1 by beating Thomas Johansson, 3-6, 6-1, 6-4.

Roddick rallied in a grueling first set, then wore down a weary Bjorkman to win, 7-6 (3), 6-4, 6-0.

France advanced 3-2 over Switzerland when Nicolas Escude defeated Michel Kratochvil, 7-6 (3), 6-4, 7-6 (6), in the fifth and deciding match. World No. 1 Roger Federer gave the Swiss a chance, winning Sunday's earlier singles match over Arnaud Clement, 6-2, 7-5, 6-4.

Spain's Juan Carlos Ferrero rallied to beat Dutchman Martin Verkerk, 6-4, 6-7 (5), 4-6, 7-5, 6-1, in a rematch of the 2003 French Open final, clinching a Davis Cup semifinal berth for Spain.

Carlos Moya defeated Sjeng Schalken, 6-3, 6-4, for a 4-1 series victory.

France's 3-2 win at Switzerland came down to the final match, and Escude beat Kratochvil despite hurting his ankle in the second set. Top-ranked Federer had kept the Swiss in the quarterfinal by defeating Clement in Sunday's opener.

Spain eliminated the Netherlands, 4-1. After Spain lost a rain-suspended doubles match early Sunday, reigning French Open champion Juan Carlos Ferrero and Carlos Moya won singles matches.

Belarus completed a 5-0 sweep over Argentina with singles victories Sunday for Max Mirnyi and Vladimir Voltchkov. Belarus reached its first Davis Cup semifinal on Saturday, taking doubles for an insurmountable 3-0 lead.

The United States hosts Belarus and France travels to Spain in the Sept. 24-26 semifinals.

France has won the Davis Cup nine times, most recently in 2001, while Spain was the 2000 champion and 2003 runner-up.

The United States has won a record 31 Davis Cups, but none since 1995. *AP*

Davenport pockets 40th title

AMELIA ISLAND, Florida—Attacking relentlessly and setting the tone with big serves, Lindsay Davenport beat an exhausted Amelie Mauresmo, 6-4, 6-4, to win the Bausch & Lomb Championships, becoming just the 10th woman to own 40 WTA Tour singles titles.

A day after starting slowly in the semifinals against Nadia Petrova, Davenport dropped the opening game against the Frenchwoman before winning five straight to take control of the match. Davenport's $93,000 winner's check pushed her over $17 million in career earnings. *AP*

Malaysians arrive for Seaba meet

THE DEFENDING champion Malaysians arrived yesterday and went straight to Lucena City where they are going to defend their title in the 4th Southeast Asia Basketball Association Junior Men's Championship starting tomorrow.

The Malaysians, who swept the 2002 Kuala Lumpur edition, count on nine 6-footers, the tallest of whom is 6-5 Sok Jay Win. Adding power underneath is 6-3, 253-lb Soh Chit Horng.

Teams from Singapore and Thailand will be arriving today to join Malaysia and the RP-Burlington Youth team in the tournament serving as qualifier for the Asian Basketball Confederation Junior Men's Championship set in India this year.

The Filipinos, being mentored by Johnny Tam, also an assistant coach of FedEx Express, are already in Lucena as early as Saturday as they bid to improve on their fourth-place finish in Malaysia.

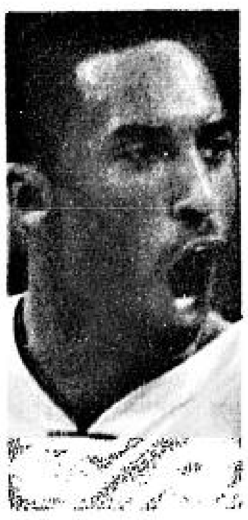
Raring for revenge, the Filipinos will meet the Malaysians in the 12:30 p.m. opener at the Quezon Convention Center. Thailand, the 2002 runner-up, clashes with Singapore in the other game at 3 p.m.

The Basketball Association of the Philippines-organized tournament has been reduced to a single-round robin, with the final set on Saturday, following the last-minute withdrawal of Indonesia.

Selected games, including the RP-Burlington-Malaysia tussle, will be telecast on a slightly delayed basis over IBC 13, according to Ted Perena of Teamsports. *Roy Luarca*

Kings spank Lakers; Celts grab last spot

SACRAMENTO, California—Chris Webber had 25 points and 12 rebounds, Doug Christie added 21 points to his superb defense and the Sacramento Kings halted their late-season skid with a 102-85 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers on Sunday.



BRYANT REUTERS

Mike Bibby had 15 points and eight assists for Sacramento (55-25), which took a one-game lead over the Lakers (54-26) in the Pacific Division with two to play by winning for just the fourth time in 10 games.

Kobe Bryant, the NBA's fourth-leading scorer, took just one shot while playing 21 minutes in the first half.

He got his first point on a jumper with 3:53 left in the third quarter. Bryant finished with eight points on 3-of-13 shooting, missing his final seven shots. He left for good with 3:16 left in the fourth, sitting wordlessly next to his teammates.

In East Rutherford, New Jersey, the Philadelphia 76ers, with Allen Iverson conspicuously absent again, were eliminated from playoff contention after losing to the Nets, 89-75, and the idle Boston Celtics clinched the Eastern Conference's last postseason spot.

The loss ended Philadelphia's five-year run of postseason appearances. Philadelphia team policy does not require injured players to travel, and Iverson has not been on the road with the team since March 20 in Miami.

Shaq curses on TV

Meanwhile, Shaquille O'Neal cursed during a live postgame television interview, the Lakers superstar's second profane outburst this season.

O'Neal fought foul trouble throughout the Lakers' 102-85 loss Sunday to Sacramento, finishing with just 10 points and five rebounds. A group interview session in the Lakers' locker room was breaking up when O'Neal made a profane response to a final question, asking him to clarify an earlier statement about the Kings' play.

"Not impressed, not impressed," he said. "Not (expletive) impressed, you know what I mean?"

At least one TV station was showing the interview live.

On Feb. 1 in Toronto, O'Neal used two profanities while criticizing the referees in a postgame interview with a Los Angeles TV station. O'Neal later issued a statement of apology, but he was suspended without pay for one game, costing the center about $295,000. *AP*

Complete results:

New Jersey 89, Philadelphia 75; Chicago 114, Toronto 108 (OT); Sacramento 102, LA Lakers 85; Golden State 108, Dallas 107; Phoenix 89, Memphis 83; San Antonio 88, LA Clippers 79 Reuters

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Editor Louie C. Camino

Fil-Am teener Out of 'AI' but happy and relieved

By Janet Susan R. Nepales
LA Correspondent

LOS ANGELES—"I was thinking that I should be upset but I'm not. I'm just so happy and relieved it's over. It has been a wonderful ride and a great experience for me."

Filipino-American teener Camile Velasco, who was eliminated last week from the top-rated US talent show "American Idol," was talking to INQUIRER Entertainment in a phone interview. The 18-year-old Hawaii-based girl said she might take judge Paula Abdul's suggestion and move to Los Angeles where "there are more opportunities for me as an artist."

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

Camile, who used to be a waitress at her family's IHOP restaurant, admitted that although she misses her "nice customers at the pancake restaurant, I still wouldn't trade my experience at 'American Idol' for anything else. My experience at 'AI' opened a lot of doors for me that I wouldn't have experienced if I didn't make it to the top 12."

Camile, who sounded relaxed, punctuated her replies with cheery responses of "Totally!" "Awesome!" "That's completely insane!" or "That was really cool!"

Elton John visit

She revealed that she is more of an R&B, hip-hop, urban girl who will find it hard to sing songs by Barry Manilow, which the remaining finalists will sing two weeks from now. They are scheduled to do movie songs on Tuesday when acclaimed director Quentin Tarantino steps in as a guest judge.

"I like doing Lauryn Hill songs," said Camile. "She's one of my favorite singers." She said she also likes rap artists like Tupac.

One of her other favorites is legendary Elton John who surprised the "AI" contestants last week when he dropped by unannounced during their rehearsal. They were practicing his songs for the Elton John-themed Tuesday night show.

"He is a legend and so I couldn't believe it when I saw him walk into the room," said Camile. "I was telling myself 'I'm not going to cry, I'm not going to cry,' but I did. I got so emotional seeing him because I just couldn't believe he's sitting in front of me.

"He even kissed my hand before I performed so that made me cry again. So, they had to skip me. But when it was time for me to sing again, I told Elton not to kiss my hand again or else I will lose it!"

Product endorsements

Aside from cosmetic, hair and other beauty product endorsements coming her way, Camile is also reportedly being wooed by producer-singer-composer Babyface.

"However, Camile is under contract with 19 Management and has to work with them until September," revealed Camile's stepdad, Dr. James West, in a separate interview with INQUIRER Entertainment. "She has to join the top 10 finalists in their 50-city tour in July, and they also have a CD coming out in April 27.

"After the Wednesday show, the judges—Paula Abdul, Randy Jackson and even Simon Cowell—congratulated her and told her that she will go far," Dr. West added.

Camile said Cowell had told her backstage that "I was special and that I just need to polish myself and then go for it. He said I had what it takes to succeed in Hollywood. He also offered his help and support to me if I needed it."

Onstage with Jasmine

Camile described the emotional moment when host Ryan Seacrest announced that she was the one eliminated and not fellow Hawaiian 'AI' finalist, Jasmine Trias. She hugged Jasmine tightly and whispered to her, "Hold it for Hawaii because you're the only one left. Do your best and I hope you go further in the competition."

Camile claimed she was prepared for the worst when she found out she was in the bottom three that night. "I thought to myself, whatever happens, happens. It has been a wonderful experience."

She said she was crying and laughing at the same time while she was watching the video tribute to her at the end of the Wednesday show because "I saw and remembered the fun memories I had in the show. It was a great learning experience."

She confessed that as a contestant in "AI," she learned to be a better listener, to be patient, to work hard, and "to channel everything negative and fuse them into something positive."

Scary part

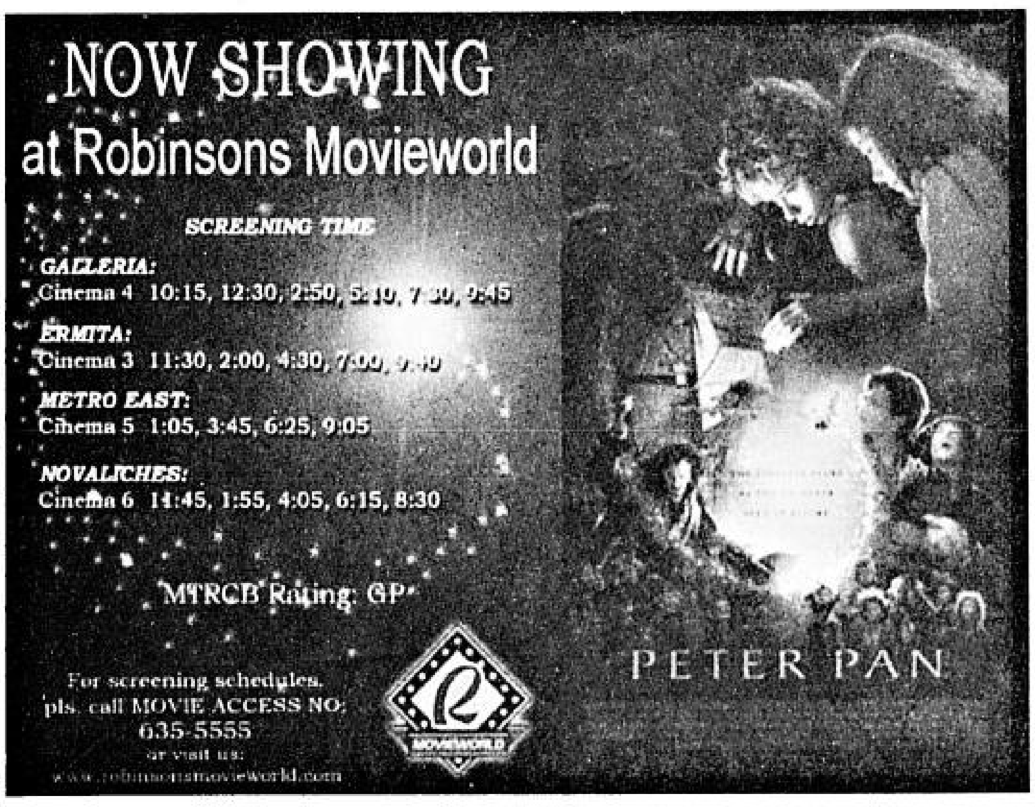
Asked how a shy Fil-Am girl like her handled all those criticisms from the judges week after week, Camile admitted, "It was really scary. Every time I was done singing and they started talking, I said to myself, 'Uh-oh, what are they going to say again?' But unlike other contestants who answered back, I was just too embarrassed to answer back. I just accepted what they had to say and I tried not to take it personally. I said to myself backstage, 'Ok, next week, I will try to be better.'"

But some contestants sometimes couldn't take Simon Cowell's stinging criticisms. Camile narrated how one time, "Simon said John Stevens' performance was 'Horrible!' and John had to be taken backstage and given tissues. I am usually emotional and cry easily, too, but when it came to the judges' critiques, I usually didn't take it personally."

Although Camile said she misses her friends and family in Hawaii, she still believes that she has a future in Los Angeles as an artist. "If I can't make it as a singer, then most likely, I will be working backstage," she said.

FIL-AM/A25

AN EMOTIONAL moment for Camile came after the announcement that she was eliminated from the contest. She then hugged another Hawaiian and Fil-Am 'AI' finalist, Jasmine Trias, and whispered to her, 'Hold it for Hawaii because you're the only one left.'



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Sarcastic Simon says

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

VIEWERS who catch "American Idol" every Tuesday and Thursday on Star World agree that **Simon Cowell** is the show's most quotable judge. Some find him perversely fascinating, while others get totally turned off by his sarcastic comments, which leave a number of contestants in tears. Well, we don't call him Sarcastic Simon for nothing!

Why is Cowell so bitchy? Part of it must be to call attention to himself by creating controversy, and in that, he's been overwhelmingly successful.

But there's method to Simon's caustic madness, as we can glean from a survey of some of the zingers he's shot at contestants in the recent past. Listen, wince, and learn:

"Your performance was a complete, utter mess."

"That was so sappy and shallow. If ever we do 'American idol' as an ice skating musical, you'd be perfect!"

"What you just did was verging on a desperate performance."

"I don't think you have the charisma to be a star."

"You were playing it too safe, so you bored me to tears."

"You're a good singer, but forgettable."

"You came across like (past finalist) Clay Aiken—but without the appeal."

"I thought your entire performance was horrible."

"Your performance is the sort of thing I'd expect somebody would do outside the subway station with a hat—and the hat would be empty."

"You're just a good karaoke singer."

"You sing OK, but you don't have the 'it' factor."

"I didn't think it was a terrific performance. But you're the sexiest girl in the bunch, so you'll get the most guy votes. Still, that doesn't make you the best!"

SARCASTIC/A26

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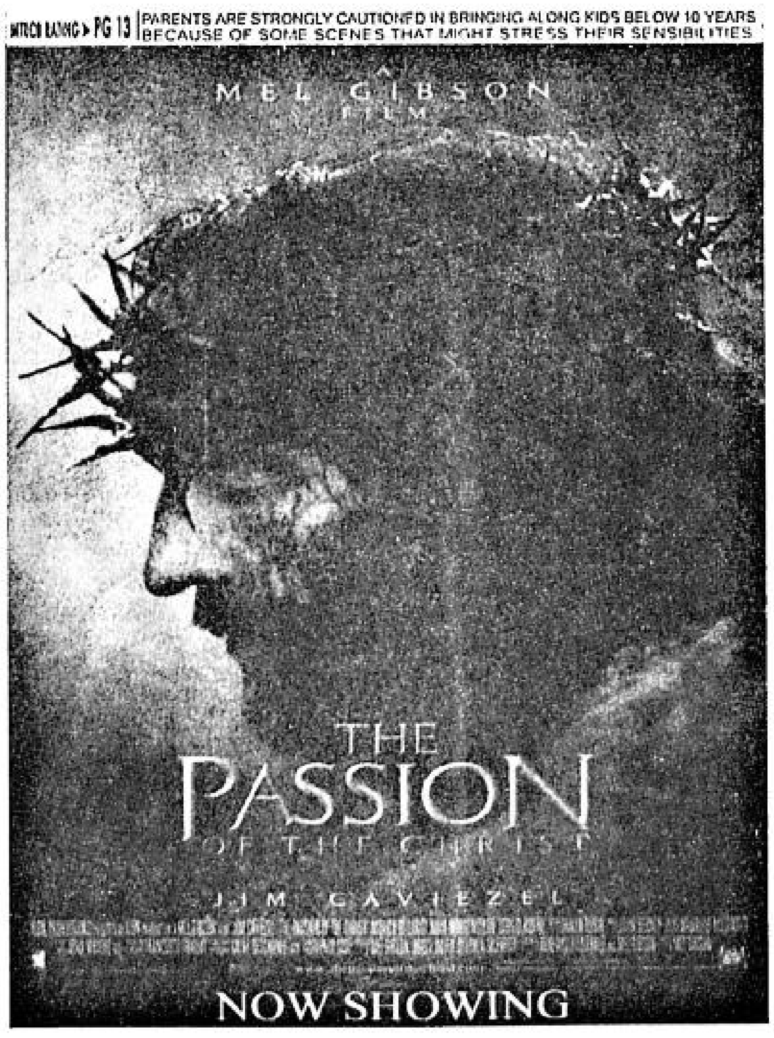

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Will 'Bulaga' spring a surprise?

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

COULD it be true that Tape Inc. (producer of "Eat Bulaga") owes GMA 7 several months of airtime?

I find that hard to believe considering that the show is loaded with commercials and is a top-rater.

A network insider told me that the "Eat Bulaga" contract with GMA 7 will expire in October and the "E.B." family is just waiting for the expiration so that they will hit the show's 25th year mark. That will give them the prestige of being the longest running noontime show indeed. After that, they will decide whether to continue with the show or bow out while they are still on top. Let's see what kind of "Bulaga" surprise they will spring on their viewers come October.

WILL/ A27

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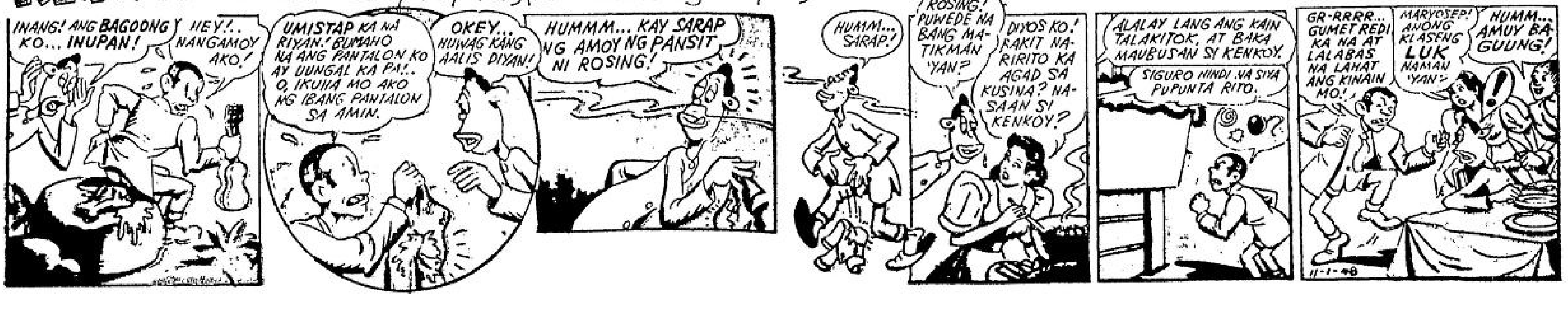

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HUMM... SARAP!
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ALALAY LANG ANG KAIN TALAKITOK, AT BAKA MAUBUSAN SI KENKOY.
SIGURO HINDI NA SIYA PUPUNTA RITO.
GR-RRRR... GUMET REDI KA NA AT LALABAS NA LAHAT ANG KINAIN MO!
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ERMITA 526-7185 / 536-7809 to 12

1 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 10:10, 12:35, 3:00, 5:25, 7:50, 10:00
2 HOUSE OF THE DEAD 10:15, 12:10, 2:05, 4:00, 5:55, 7:50, 9:50
3 PETER PAN 11:30, 2:00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:40
4 THE UNINVITED 10:10, 12:35, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00
5 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 11:20, 1:45, 4:10, 6:35, 9:20
6 TAKING LIVES 10:10, 12:25, 2:40, 4:55, 7:10, 9:40
7 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 11:20, 1:45, 4:10, 6:35, 9:20

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1 THE UNINVITED 12:30, 3:20, 6:10, 9:00
2 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 11:50, 2:30, 5:10, 7:50, 10:30
3 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 11:50, 2:30, 5:10, 7:50, 10:30
4 TAKING LIVES 12:05, 2:15, 4:25, 6:40, 9:00
5 PETER PAN 1:05, 3:45, 6:25, 9:05
6 SCOOBY DOO 2 10:50, 12:50, 2:50, 4:50, 6:50, 9:00
7 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 12:30, 3:10, 5:50, 8:30
8 50 FIRST DATES 11:50, 1:50, 3:45, 5:40, 7:35, 9:30

Big R Supercenter NOVALICHES / FAIRVIEW 935-3229 / 31

1 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 10:10, 12:50, 3:30, 6:10, 8:50
2 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 10:10, 12:50, 3:30, 6:10, 8:50
3 TAKING LIVES 11:45, 1:55, 4:05, 6:15, 8:30
4 HOUSE OF THE DEAD 12:00, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:10
5 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 11:30, 2:10, 4:50, 7:30
6 PETER PAN 11:45, 1:55, 4:05, 6:15, 8:30
7 THE UNINVITED 10:20, 12:45, 3:10, 5:35, 8:10
8 50 FIRST DATES 12:00, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:10

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1 PETER PAN
2 TAKING LIVES
3 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST
4 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST

big Supercenter CAINTA
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1 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST
2 PETER PAN
3 TAKING LIVES
4 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST

Big R Supercenter STA. ROSA
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1 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST
2 THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT
3 THE CURSE
4 PETER PAN
5 TAKING LIVES

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1 TAKING LIVES
2 50 FIRST DATES
3 HIDALGO
4 THE GRUDGE 2
5 HIGHWAYMEN

Big R Supercenter DASMARIÑAS
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1 HIGHWAYMEN
2 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST
3 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST
4 HIDALGO
5 TAKING LIVES

Big R Supercenter STARMILLS
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1 50 FIRST DATES
2 DON'T TEMPT ME
3 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
4 THE CURSE
5 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST
6 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST

IMUS
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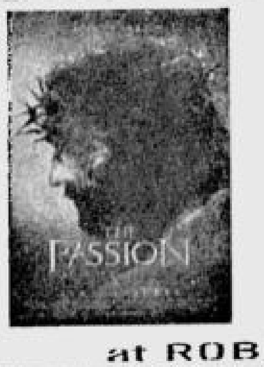
1 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST
2 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST
3 HOUSE OF THE DEAD
4 TAKING LIVES
5 THE UNINVITED
6 PETER PAN

BACOLOD
441-0458/59

1 TORQUE
2 SCOOBY DOO 2
3 RUNAWAY JURY
4 BONE SNATCHER
5 HIDALGO
6 THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT

ILOILO
336-8070/78

1 TORQUE
2 LOVE ACTUALLY
3 THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT
4 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
5 SCOOBY DOO 2
6 WISE GIRLS



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Fil-Am teener . . .

From page A24

referring to Paula Abdul's advice.

Going home

Born in the Philippines, Camile looks forward to visiting the country again. Although she apologetically admits that she doesn't speak Filipino, she is very grateful to her Filipino fans both in the US and in the Philippines for supporting her all these weeks.

When she was a guest on Ryan Seacrest's "On Air" afternoon TV show, she was welcomed in the studio by a number of Filipino-American fans who held posters that read "The Philippines loves Camile!" or "Manila is proud of Camile!" She greeted them with "Mabuhay!"

Whole family

Aside from her mom Rennie, stepdad Dr. West and younger sister Divina who supported her last Tuesday and Wednesday, Camile has another sister, Alexis, 15, who flew all the way from Japan to be with her during her performance. After the Wednesday night show, the whole family went to an Italian restaurant in Hollywood to celebrate.

"Camile was crying for 10 minutes, then she was happy and relieved that it was over," Dr. West revealed. "It really doesn't matter whether you finish 9th or 8th or 7th because you will be undergoing all the same stress and pressure anyway."

Camile said her natural father, William, who is in the US Navy and is based in Japan, talked to her over the phone after she greeted him "happy birthday" on last Wednesday's show. "He was so excited and happy for me to be able to enjoy the whole experience of being a finalist in 'American Idol,'" she said.

Celebrity

Now that she's a "celebrity," Camile still got excited when she first walked on the red carpet at a Hollywood event.

"I usually just see that on TV, and then there I was walking on the red carpet and the media people were interviewing and taking photos of me," she gushed. "That was cool!"

Aside from Seacrest's "On Air," Camile also guested in Seacrest's popular radio show on KISS-FM and again on TV in "Entertainment Tonight" and "Access Hollywood."

Now that she's no longer in the competition, she vows to watch the show and give support to her friends. She said she became close to La Toya London, Fantasia Barrino, Jasmine Trias and eliminated 'AI' contestants Matthew Rogers and Amy Adams.

So, who does she think would win?

Camile refused to give a name. "It's really unfair to say who should win the competition because I think all of them are qualified," she said.

Sarcastic Simon says

From page A24

"You're OK, but you strike me as blah—like the back-up to the Temptations."

"I thought your performance was shaky, ordinary—so what?"

"Overall, you did well, but your voice was all over the place."

"If I were you, I'd pack my suitcase, because I think you're going home tonight!"

—Ouch, and double-ouch! But, beyond the quotable bitchiness, is Cowell telling the contestants some things that they should pay attention to, even if it hurts like heck? Yes.

The way we parse it, Cowell is telling aspiring star singers that "star quality" is sometimes more important than basic singing talent.

To come across like a potential star, a singer shouldn't play it safe, he should dare to be different, to take risks, so he will stand out in the madding crowd.

But he should have the training and good judgement to be ready to take those risks without making an unmusical fool of himself.

He should know his limitations, but he should also be clever enough to know how to hide them—or, even better, to turn them into an advantage!

The aspiring singing star should also realize that there are many good singers out there, so he has to try harder and be more determined than most.

But he should be competitive without turning people off. That's quite a trick, which is why only a few people make it as stars.

It would also help a lot if the potential star uses criticism to learn from, and to push him to improve his style, look or repertoire.

So, if the contestant can take Cowell's blunt comments without giving up or getting mad, he or she could just end up as this year's American Idol!

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THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST PG13 11:50, 2:30, 5:10, 7:50, 10:30	UNINVITED R13 12:15, 2:45, 5:15, 7:45, 10:10	PETER PAN GP 12:20, 2:45, 5:10, 7:35, 10:00

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3	THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 11:45, 2:15, 4:45, 7:15, 9:45 PG-13
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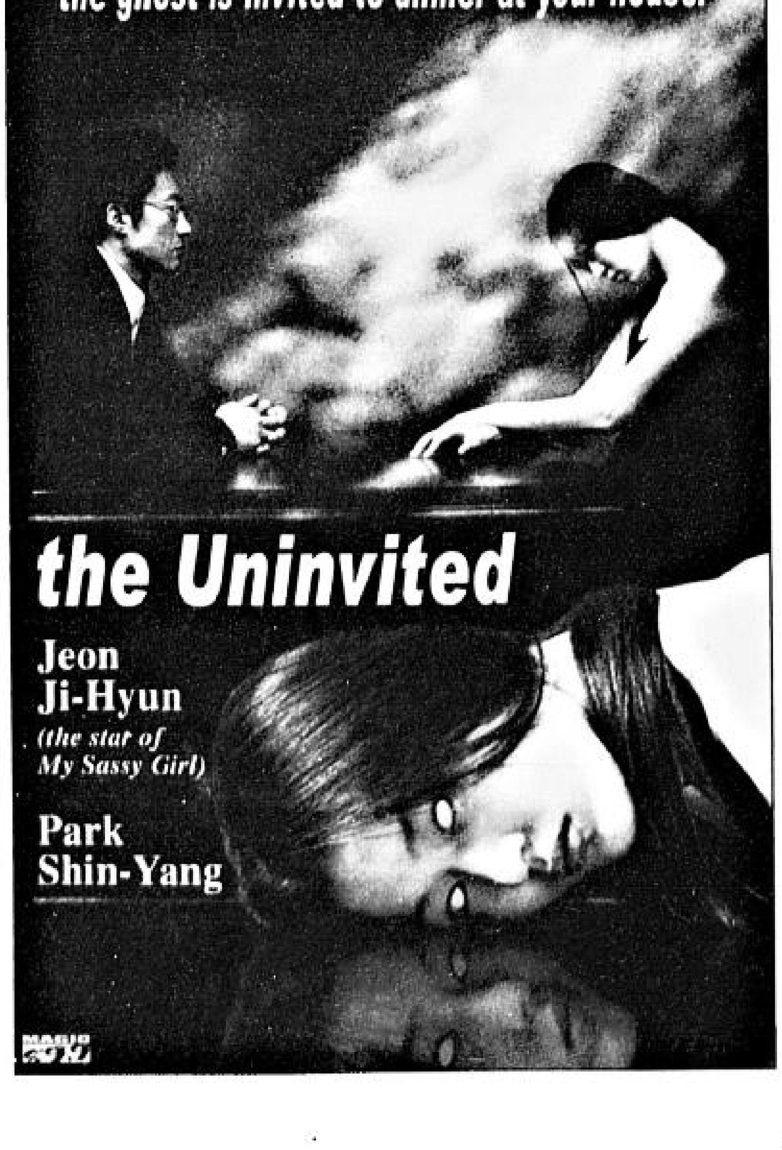

the Uninvited
Jeon Ji-Hyun
(the star of My Sassy Girl)
Park Shin-Yang

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Ali 5	THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST
Ali 6	PETER PAN
Ali 7	TAKING LIVES

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APR 17	18TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LORD'S FLOCK
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APR 20	NCA 7 - COCK DERBY
APR 21	PBA : SHELL VS. SAN MIGUEL
APR 22	NCA 7-COCK DERBY

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TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
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QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	LIGAYA / NANABIK
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR
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A	KASIPING
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C	
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SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
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STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	OTSO OTSO
CINEMA-2	KARIBAL
CINEMA-3	MAGNIFICO
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	PASSION OF THE CHRIST
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	HAUNTED OFFICE
CINEMA-6	GRUDGE 2
CINEMA-7	TORQUE
CINEMA-8	HIGHWAYMEN
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	PASSION OF THE CHRIST
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	PASSION OR THE CHRIST
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	PASSION OF THE CHRIST
CINEMA-12	SCOOBY DOO 2
CINEMA-14	HOUSE OF THE DEAD
CINEMA-15	50 FIRST DATES
LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
(LAS PIÑAS)	THE CURSE
CINEMA-1	OTSO OTSO
CINEMA-2	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
CINEMA-4	[illegible]
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARAÑAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
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CINEMA-4	SELDA

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3 (DTS) TAKING LIVES
4 GOLD (DTS) PASSION OF THE CHRIST
5 GOLD (DOLBY) PASSION OF THE CHRIST
6 GOLD (SDDS) TAKING LIVES
7 GOLD (DOLBY) PETER PAN
8 [illegible] SCOOBY DOO-2
9 [illegible] UNINVITED
10 [illegible] PETER PAN

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3 (DOLBY) TAKING LIVES
4 (DOLBY) PETER PAN

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2 PASSION OF THE CHRIST
3 PUNLA

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2 CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
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4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) HOUSE OF THE DEAD
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2 HOUSE OF THE DEAD
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5 PASSION OF THE CHRIST
6 PETER PAN

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5 RESERVE
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7 (DTS)
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9 (DOLBY)

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1 HOUSE OF THE DEAD
2 PETER PAN
3 UNINVITED
4 (SDDS) TAKING LIVES
5 RESERVE
6 (DOLBY) PASSION OF THE CHRIST
7 (DTS) RESERVE
8 OTSO OTSO
9 KARIBAL

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2 (SDDS)
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4 PETER PAN

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5 RESERVE

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2 OTSO OTSO

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4 (SDDS) TAKING LIVES
5 (DTS) PETER PAN
6 HOUSE
7 HOUSE OF THE DEAD

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2 DON'T TEMPT ME
3 (DTS EX) PASSION OF CHRIST
4 CHEAPER BY THE DDOZEN

Cine Nepo
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1 WISE GIRL
2 PASSION OF CHRIST
3 (DOLBY) CHEAPER BY THE DDOZEN
4 (DTS) PASSION OF CHRIST

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2 GRUDGE-2
3 (DOLBY) 50 FIRST DATE
4 (DTS) TORQUE

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2 TAKING LIVES
3 (DTS) PETER PAN

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2 (DTS) TAKING LIVES
3 (DOLBY) PASSION OF CHRIST
4 PETER PAN

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3 (DTS) PASSION OF CHRIST
4 TAKING LIVES

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1 50 FIRST DATE
2 TORQUE
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2 50 FIRST DATE
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2 HIDALGO
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2 KARIBAL
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2 VENUS
3 (DTS) PASSION OF CHRIST
4 TAKING LIVES
5 THE CURSE

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2 TAKING LIVES

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2 TAKING LIVES
3

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3 (DTS) HAUNTED OFFICE
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SCOOBY-DOO 2
MONSTERS UNLEASHED

NOW SHOWING

Will 'Bulaga' spring a surprise?

From page A24

A network insider told me that ABS-CBN 2's soap operas clobber all their GMA 7 rivals, but when it comes to noontime shows and newscasts, GMA 7 is leading in the ratings game. But for sure both networks will keep trying to outdo each other. TV is indeed a battlefield where Sun Tzu's "Art of War" principle of winning without fighting does not apply.

Singer mum

HOW true are murmurs that a young and very popular singer is planning to file sexual harassment charges against a married top honcho in the industry?

A colleague told me that if the chanteuse had her way, she would rather keep quiet about it, but it's her mom who is out to avenge her daughter. The poor young thing is really so meek and fragile. Too bad the big boss took advantage of her vulnerability.

Perhaps the singer feels that she's indebted to the boss who gave her a big break in the recording scene, so she does not want to squeal on him. Is it a question of loyalty or royalty (in record sales)?

Joed smitten

A VANNESS Wu fanatic e-mailed me in reaction to my item about the Taiwanese sensation getting peeved at concert producer **Joed Serrano** for being extra chummy with him. The fan claimed that Joed was not thrown out of the Cebu venue where Vanness had a concert. Joed really found the pop superstar so irresistible and kept on staring at the Taiwanese. Fanatics are fanatics, so I rest my case.

For feedback, e-mail friends_elpueblo@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaithband.com.

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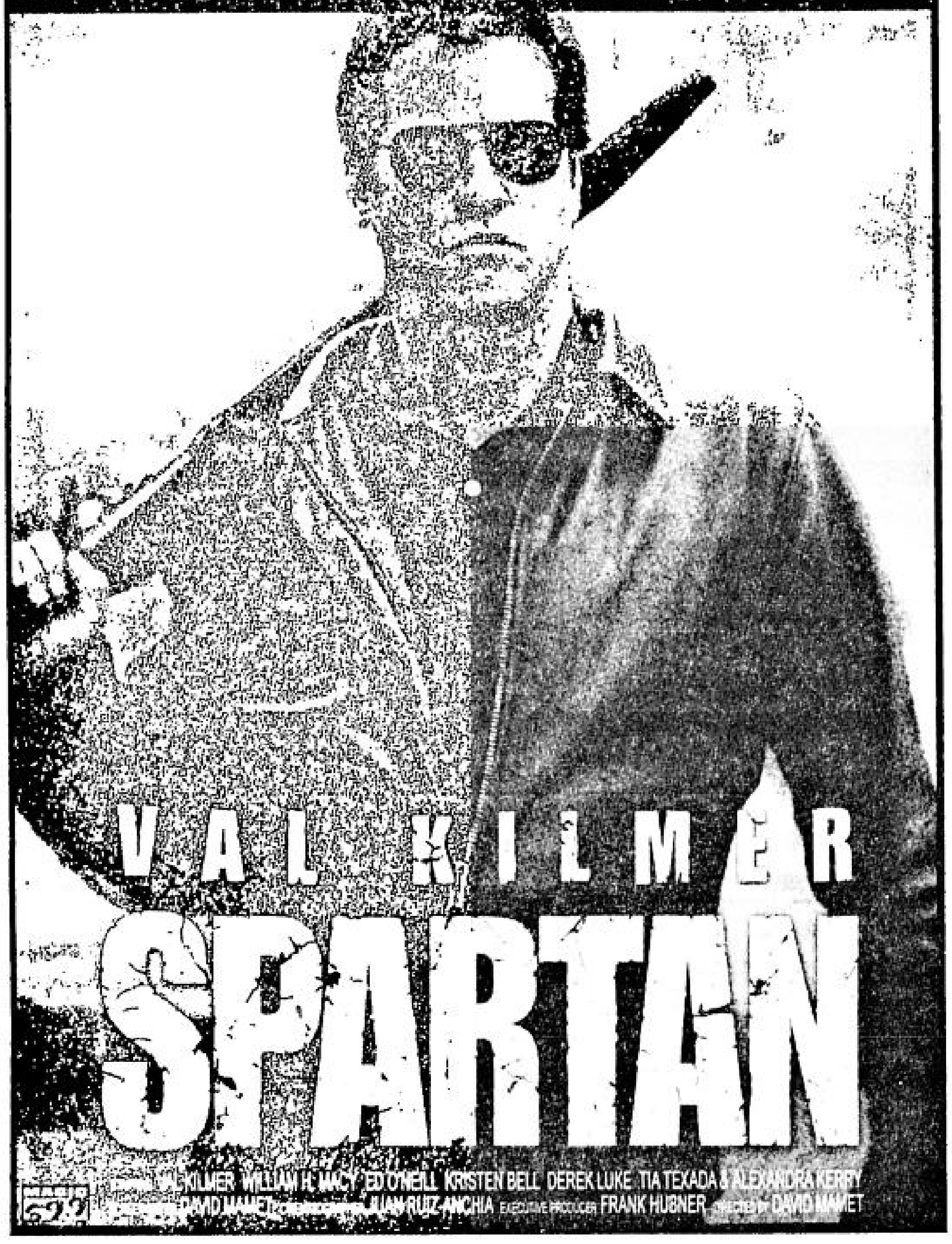
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Martin Nievera
Nina
Andrea del Rosario
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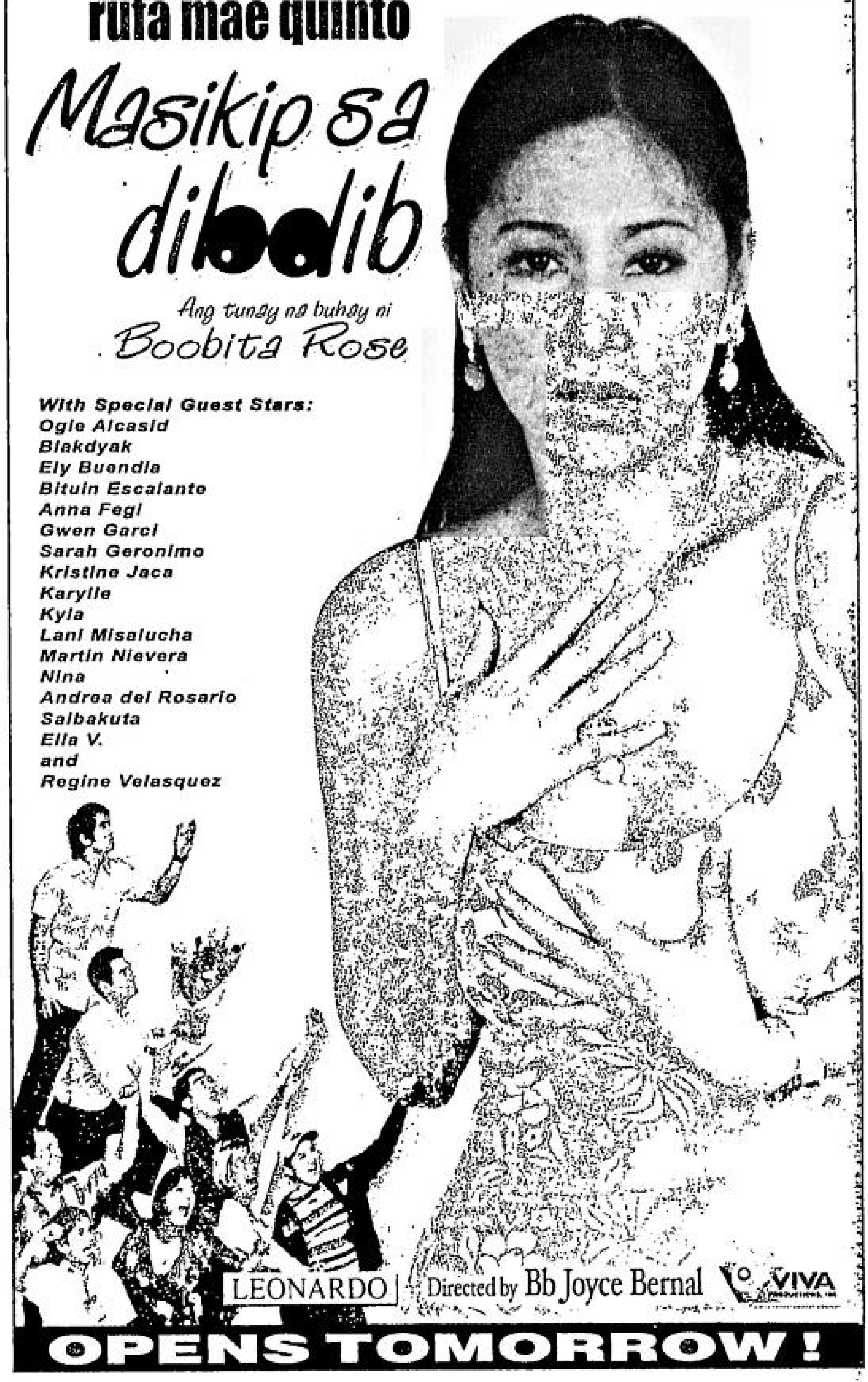
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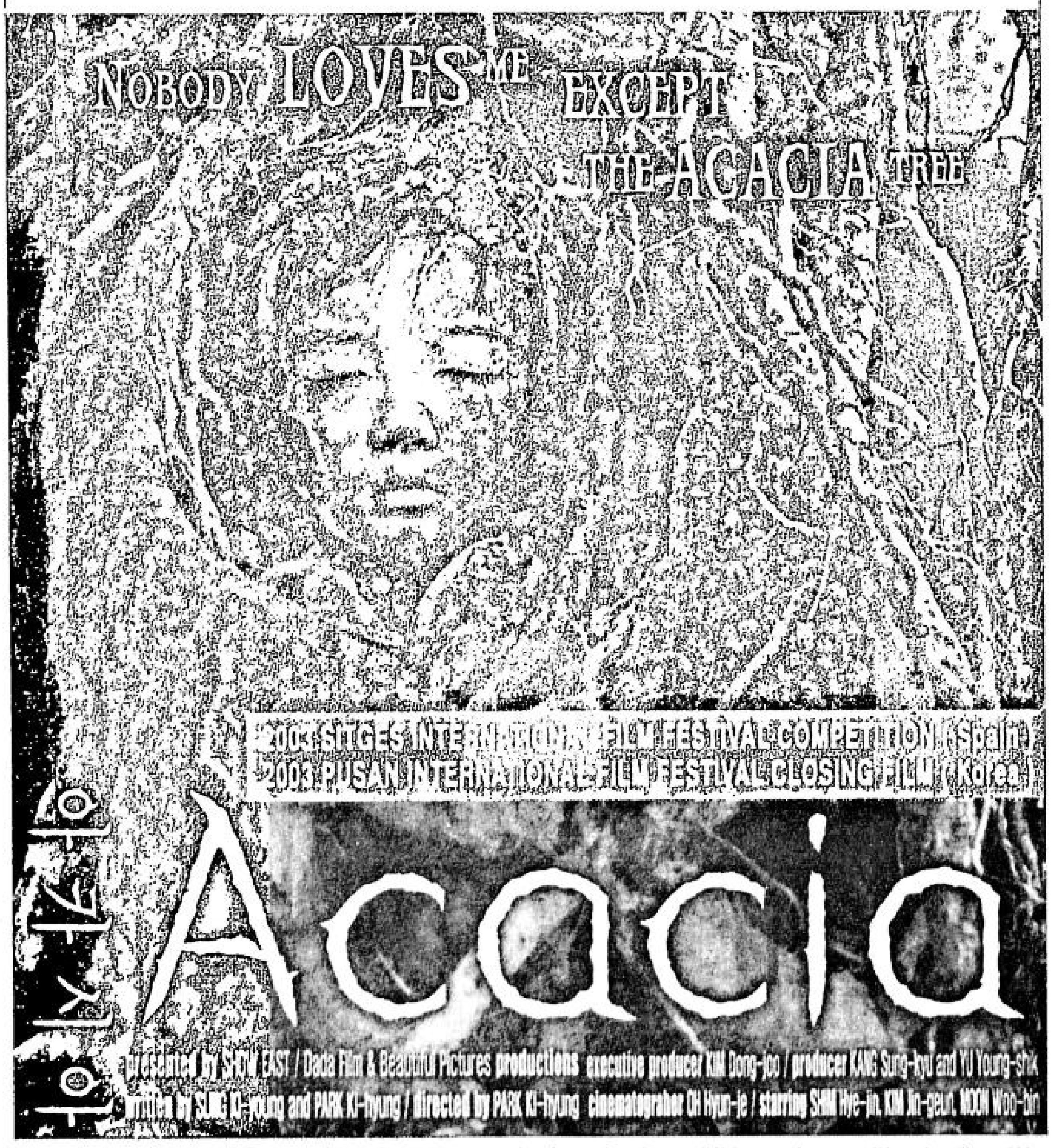
OPENS TOMORROW!

OPENS TOMORROW!


NOBODY LOVES ME EXCEPT THE ACACIA TREE
2003 SITGES INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL COMPETITION (Spain)
2003 PUSAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL CLOSING FILM (Korea)
Acacia
presented by SHOW EAST / Dada Film & Beautiful Pictures productions executive producer KIM Dong-joo / producer KANG Sung-kyu and YU Young-shik
written by SUNG Ki-young and PARK Ki-hyung / directed by PARK Ki-hyung cinematographer OH Hyun-je / starring SHIM Hye-jin, KIM Jin-geun, MOON Woo-bin

MTRCB RATING R-13 STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS OF AGE AND ABOVE
OPENS TOMORROW!
After "Kiss the Girls" & "High Crimes", Ashley Judd returns in another suspense thriller that will keep you at the edge of your seats from beginning to end.

SAMUEL L. JACKSON ASHLEY JUDD ANDY GARCIA
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Get a chance to WIN 1 of 60 SUMMER INFLATABLES
For every P300 single purchase of any Toyworld items
Promo Period: April 1-30

TOY WORLD

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Slide n' Play Ball Pit
Castle Pool Playground
Beachcomber Fun Island

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See poster mechanics for details
Per DTI NCR Permit No. 1384 Series of 2004

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MANILA • PAMPANGA • ILOILO • CEBU • DAVAO • CAGAYAN DE ORO • BICUTAN • LUCENA • BAGUIO • MARILAO

PHILIPPINES' BET IS 1ST RUNNER-UP IN MS. MAJA

Manila—Margaret Ann "Maan" Bayot, Bb. Pilipinas-International 2004 and the country's representative to the 2004 Ms. Maja International Pageant, conquered the stage, charmed the crowd to becoming an instant favorite, and eventually won 1st runner-up in the beauty pageant held in Colombia at 2 p.m. (Manila time) yesterday. She placed 2nd to hometown candidate, Ms. Colombia Sandra Sanchez, while Ms. Canada Natalie Glebova clinched the 2nd runner-up post in the only international beauty pageant that pays tribute to world-renowned Spanish painter Don Francisco Goya's 'Dressed Maja' and 'Naked Maja.' Maan will also represent the Philippines in the Miss International Pageant in Beijing, China, in October.

See'Mall! AYALA CENTER GLORIETTA & GREENBELT · ALABANG TOWN CENTER · AYALA CENTER CEBU Love'Mall!

AYALA CINEMAS

	ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	G1 GLORIETTA 1	G4 GLORIETTA 4	GB3 GREENBELT 3	ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU
1	THX THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST	TAKING LIVES	TAKING LIVES	GUARANTEED SEATS THX TAKING LIVES 2:00, 4:20, 6:40, 9:00, 11:20	THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST
2	PETER PAN	THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST	THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST	GUARANTEED SEATS THX THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 2:15, 5:00, 7:45, 10:30	THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST
3	TAKING LIVES	PETER PAN	GUARANTEED SEATS THX THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 12:30, 3:10, 5:50, 8:30	GUARANTEED SEATS THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 12:50, 3:35, 6:20, 9:05, 11:50	THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST
4	SCOOBY-DOO 2	UNINVITED	SCOOBY-DOO 2	GUARANTEED SEATS THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 2:55, 5:40, 8:25, 11:10	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
5	THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST		THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST	GUARANTEED SEATS PETER PAN 1:30, 3:50, 6:10, 8:30, 10:50	DIABLO
6			PETER PAN		
7			50 FIRST DATES		

GB1 GREENBELT 1	
1	PETER PAN 12:10, 2:30, 4:50, 7:10, 9:30
2	THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 1:35, 4:20, 7:05, 9:50

ENTERTAINMENT LIVE!

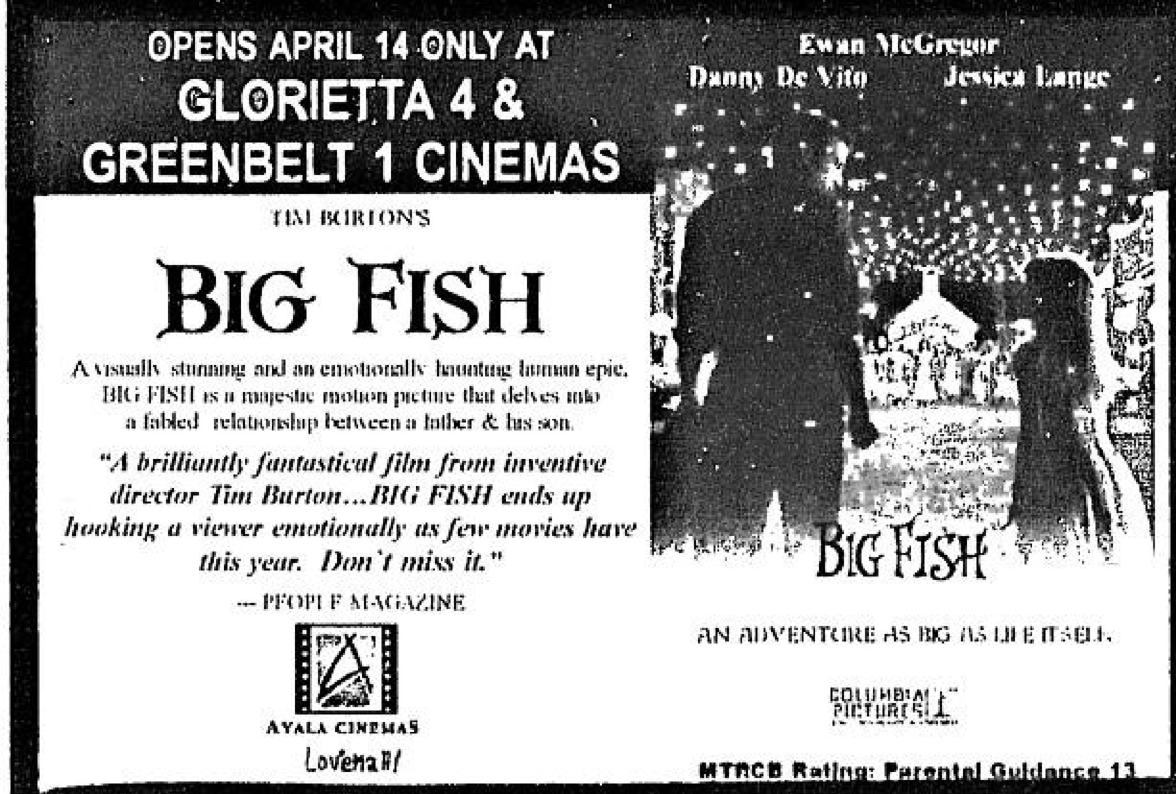
GLORIETTA	GREENBELT
HARD ROCK CAFÉ, GLORIETTA 3 featuring SERENITY (April 15, 9:30om)	**MERK'S:** Happy Hour - MAE **TAVERN ON THE SQUARE:** Streamline (April 15, 9:30 pm)

At the Activity Center

GLORIETTA	ALABANG TOWN CENTER	AYALA CENTER CEBU
NICKELODEON'S SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS: BIKINI BOTTOM BASH April 15 to 17 - 3:00pm and 5:00pm, April 18 - 1:00pm, 3:00pm, 5:00 pm	MEDI MARKETING HEALTH & BEAUTY FAIR April 16 to 18, 2004	BURAG SA HARING LUNGSOD (A Concert for Peace) April 15, 2004

stage
REPERTORY'S CAUGHT IN THE NET
April 16, 17, 18, 23, 24, 25 & 30

EXPO
TRADE HALL FOR EXHIBITS, EVENTS AND MORE!
For inquiries and bookings, please call 750-4982 to 84


OPENS APRIL 14 ONLY AT GLORIETTA 4 & GREENBELT 1 CINEMAS

Ewan McGregor
Danny De Vito Jessica Lange

TIM BURTON'S
BIG FISH

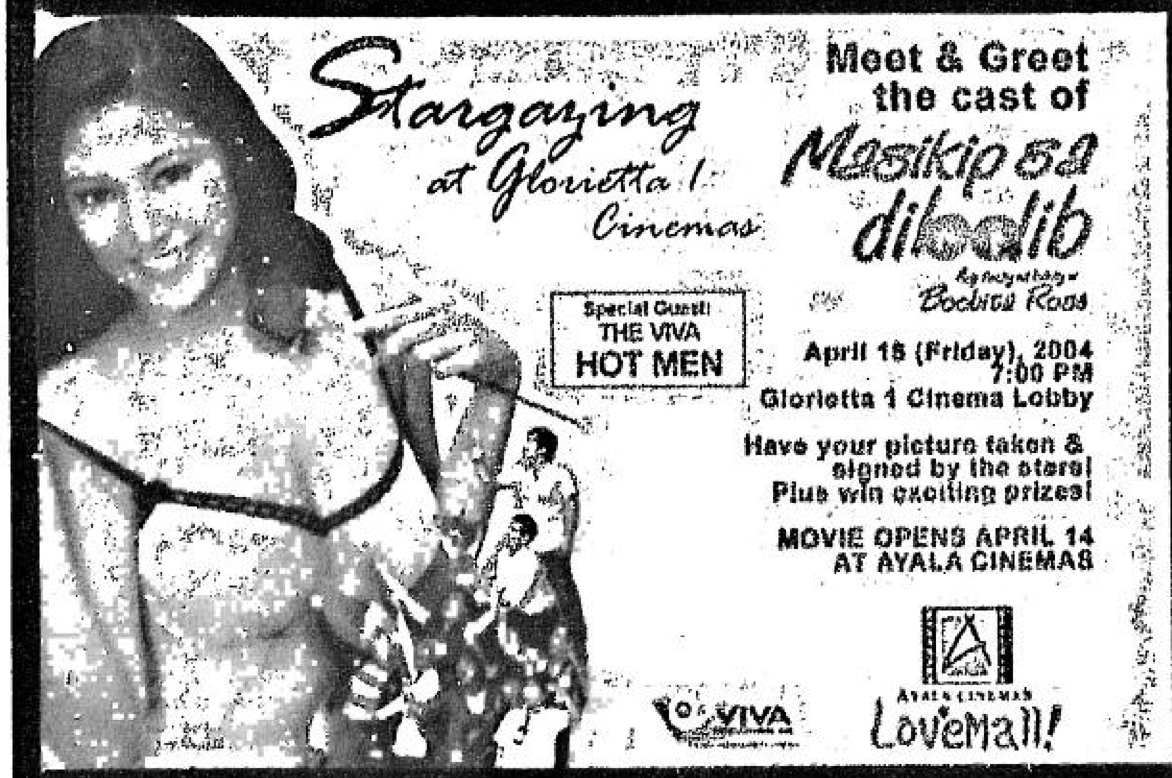
A visually stunning and an emotionally haunting human epic. BIG FISH is a majestic motion picture that delves into a fabled relationship between a father & his son.

"A brilliantly fantastical film from inventive director Tim Burton...BIG FISH ends up hooking a viewer emotionally as few movies have this year. Don't miss it."
— PEOPLE MAGAZINE

AYALA CINEMAS Love'Mall!

AN ADVENTURE AS BIG AS LIFE ITSELF.
COLUMBIA PICTURES
MTRCB Rating: Parental Guidance 13

Cool fun for everyone!
CAUGHT IN THE NET
by Ray Cooney
directed by Miguel Faustmann
April 16, 17, 23, 24, 30; May 1, 2004 @ 8PM
April 18, 25; May 2, 2004 @ 2:30PM
Globe Theater
Greenbelt 1, Ayala Center
Makati City
Ticket Outlets
Greenbelt 1 Cinemas
PG-13


Stargazing at Glorietta 1 Cinemas

Meet & Greet the cast of Masikip sa dibdib
Bobita Ross

Special Guest: THE VIVA HOT MEN

April 16 (Friday), 2004
7:00 PM
Glorietta 1 Cinema Lobby

Have your picture taken & signed by the stars!
Plus win exciting prizes!

MOVIE OPENS APRIL 14 AT AYALA CINEMAS

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Customer Service text hotline: Glorietta - 752-7272; from 10am to 8pm
Greenbelt - 757-4853; from 11am to 12mn

Alabang Town Center - 842-2782; from 10am to 8pm
Ayala Center Cebu - (032) 231-5342 loc 324

Ayala Cinema Links: For screening times call 729-7777. Movies are subject to change without prior notice. Reserve your seats by texting SURESEATS GB3 or SURESEATS G4 to 2333 (Globe) or 211 (Smart). Or log on to www.sureseats.com for web reservations.

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TUESDAY,
APRIL 13, 2004

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BUSINESS

B1

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Peso hits 2-mo high at 56.13 to $1

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO yesterday closed at a two-month high of 56.13 to $1 as remittances from overseas Filipino workers as well as trade and portfolio investments inflows started increasing.

Only a few weeks after hitting an all-time low of 56.45 to $1 on concerns over the country's dwindling foreign reserves, the local currency hit an intra-day high of 56.11 and a low of 56.30 before closing at 56.13 yesterday.

The peso gained 16.5 centavos in a single day from the 56.295 closing before the long Lenten holidays. The volume at the Philippine Dealing System stood at $101.50 million yesterday.

"The peso rose on the back of inflows from OFWs, exporters' dollar sales and portfolio investments inflow," BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco said.

"Also, there was minimal dollar demand," he added.

Foreign exchange traders agreed that the peso's sharp gains were fueled by higher inflows. They added that banks were squaring off their long positions after the long holiday break.

OFW remittances are seasonally weak in the first quarter but they start to strengthen in the second quarter for the graduation season and the opening of the next school year.

With the momentum now in favor of the peso, traders said the local currency might test the next psychological support at 56 to the dollar today. However, uncertainties from the nearing presidential elections will likely cap the peso's ascent, they noted.

The local currency is also boosted by the improved outlook on the country's external position. The balance of payment surplus is seen to improve, if not return to a surplus, in the month of March due to net inflows from fresh public sector borrowings.

The BSP's net international reserves as of end-March, inclusive of revaluation of reserve assets and reserve-related liabilities, stood at $13.6 billion, 5.5 percent better than the level as of end-February.

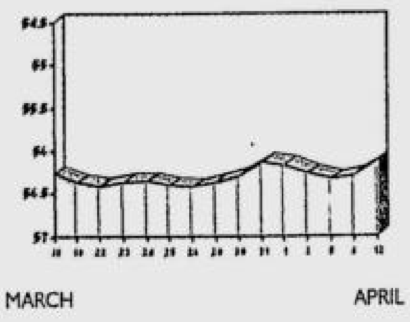
The NIR level, exclusive of revaluation, stood at $12.28 billion as of end-March last year.

The BOP measures the foreign exchange transactions between the economy and the rest of the world. Its major components are the current account and the capital and financial account.

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE



₱ 56.13 = $1
As of 5 p.m., April 12, 2004

¥ 106.26= $1
As of 5 p.m., April 12, 2004

GOLD: $421.0-421.5
per ounce Hong Kong, April 8, 2004

STOCK MARKET

Shares close lower

STOCKS broke a six-session rally yesterday due to profit-taking on select blue chips led by the country's largest conglomerate Ayala Corp and power distributor Meralco.

But gains in Southeast Asia's largest food and beverage firm San Miguel Corp. and Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co (PLDT) tempered falls, as trading resumed after a five-day Easter break.

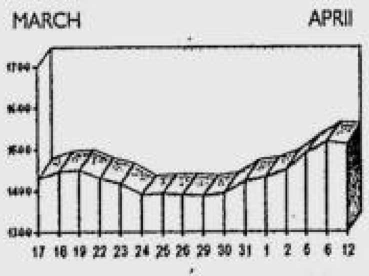
Manila Electric Co.'s B shares, which are open to foreigners, fell 5.36 percent or P1.50 to P26.50.

Ayala Land Inc fell 10 centavos or 1.79 percent to P5.50.

"There's a lull after the Lenten holidays. The market was up for six straight days and investors are just locking in gains," said AB Capital

SHARES/ B8

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B8)

T-bill rates up; bids for 1-yr papers rejected

SHORT-term interest rates increased in yesterday's Treasury bills auction, still on uncertainties leading to the May 10 presidential polls and on anticipation of tighter Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas policy rates.

The average 91-day T-bill rate, used as benchmark for banks' lending rates, rose to 7.658 percent or 4.2 basis points higher than the previous week's level.

The Bureau of Treasury awarded the entire offering of P3.5 billion for the 91-day rates.

The 182-day rate also averaged higher at 8.661 percent, against the previous level of 8.612 percent, on a partial award of P1.735 billion against the government's offering of P3 billion.

The BTr, however, rejected all offers for the 364-day T-bills due to high bids. The offers ranged from 8.2 percent to 8.5 percent.

. National Treasurer Mina Figueroa said the pressure on T-bill rates would likely continue during the run-up to the elections. Likewise causing pressure on the rates, she noted, was the expectation of higher BSP policy rates.

She said the market preferred short-term instruments given the uncertainty related to the elections.

"But we think these are the rates acceptable to us," she said.

Figueroa hinted at the possibility of rejecting offers in the coming auctions if the banks would continue bidding the rates up.

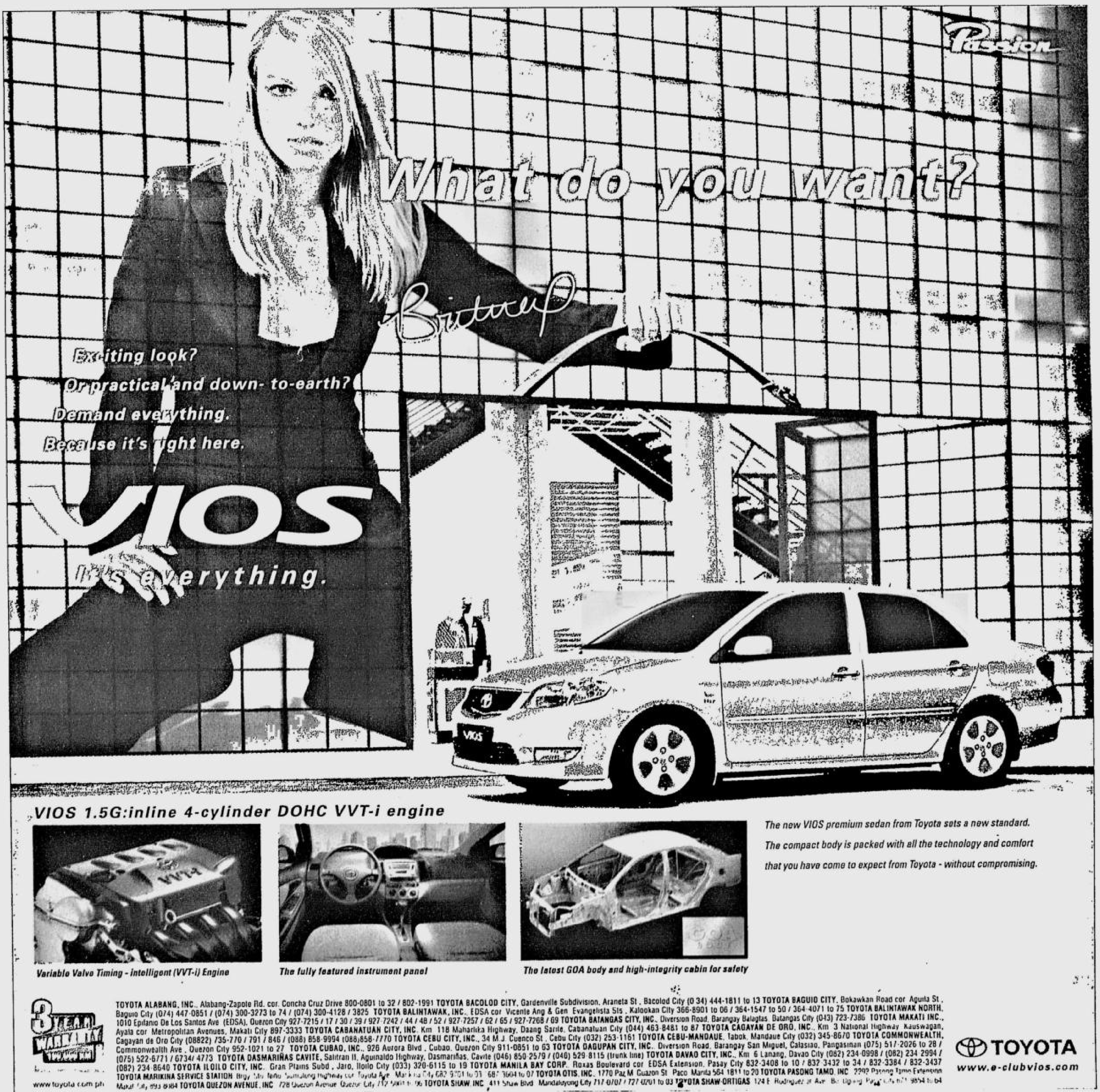
Money market traders said the continued volatility of the peso was likewise affecting the T-bill rates.

The BSP, for its part, said the recent peso depreciation was still unlikely to affect consumer prices. The next overnight policy-rate setting of the Monetary Board is set for April 18.

For the first time in two years, the T-bill rate, based on the benchmark 91-day T-bill rate, is now higher than the BSP's overnight borrowing rate.

The BSP's key policy rates were at 6.75 percent for the overnight borrowing or reverse repurchase and 9 percent for the overnight lending or repurchase rate.

These rates were last adjusted in July last year when the rates were cut by 25 basis points. Although the rates were kept at the same level since then, there was a virtual tightening in August when the MB lifted the tiering scheme for banks' placements with the BSP. *Doris C. Dumlao*



VIOS 1.5G:inline 4-cylinder DOHC VVT-i engine

Variable Valve Timing - Intelligent (VVT-i) Engine

The fully featured instrument panel

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ICC allows MWSS to bid out new BOT project

THE INTER-AGENCY Investment Coordination Committee allowed the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System to bid out a new build-operate-and-transfer contract to supply at least 400 million liters of treated bulk water a day.

In a statement, the ICC's lead agency, the National Economic and Development Authority, said the new BOT project aimed to address the shortage of water sources in Metropolitan Manila.

"The project will involve the participation of the private sector, which will deliver a minimum 400 MLD treated bulk water to the MWSS, which, in turn, will sell it to Maynilad Water Services Inc. and Manila Water Co. Inc.," the Neda statement said.

The winning bidder will have to identify the proposed raw water sources, prepare the feasibility study, the detailed engineering design and the environmental studies. It will be responsible for financing the entire project, including acquisitions of rights-of-way, required permits and environmental compliance certificate.

The proponent will also construct all the system components, such as transmission mains, treatment plant, water reservoir, and others, including operating and maintaining the proposed treated bulk water supply system.

The total partnership period between the government and the winning bidder was set at 28 years, with the development and construction period taking three years and the operating period lasting 25 years.

"The proponent will operate the facility over a fixed term, during which it will be allowed to charge facility users appropriate fees to recover its investment, as well as cover operating and maintenance costs," the Neda said.

Based on several studies commissioned by the MWSS, there is an urgent need to address water shortage in Manila.

For instance, according to the study on water resources development for Metro Manila, which the Japan International Cooperation Agency conducted in February 2003, the most critical period will be in 2013, where the demand-supply gap was estimated to reach as much as 900 MLD.

Based on MWSS projections, there is a need for an additional water supply of about 400 MLD by 2007, with a projected increase of about 200 MLD annually for the period 2005 to 2010.

Doris Dumlao

Veterans Bank posts income rise

PHILIPPINE Veterans Bank, a commercial bank owned by Filipino World War II veterans and their heirs, yesterday reported a 10-percent rise in net income to P227.9 million in 2003 from a year ago.

Bank officials attributed last year's gains to higher interest margins, bigger volume of fee-based transactions, better sales of real-and-other properties-owned-and-acquired, as well as effective cost management.

For 2004, PVB president Ricardo Balbido said the bank expected difficult market conditions to continue.

"However, we are keen on any opportunities that may emerge this year for the bank. Likewise, we will continue to attract both government and private sector markets by developing new product lines in convenience banking," Balbido said.

"With our advantage as an authorized depository of government funds, we are identifying new product lines for this market as we rationalize our branch banking and with the improvements in our information technology systems," he said.

PVB chair Emmanuel de Ocampo said the bank's profit motivation and prudent corporate governance was driven by its mandate to financially provide each year for the WW2 veterans.

NOTICE TO SHAREHOLDERS OF SPI TECHNOLOGIES, INC.

All shareholders of SPI Technologies, Inc. ("SPI") are hereby notified that on April 5, 2004, **THLPV ACQUISITION, L.P.** ("the Bidder") has filed a Tender Offer Report (SEC Form 19-1) with the Securities and Exchange Commission ("SEC") and the Philippine Stock Exchange ("PSE") pursuant to Section 19 of the Securities Regulation Code. The Bidder, which is a limited partnership organized in the State of Delaware, U S A , intends to acquire, through a wholly-owned Philippine subsidiary it intends to establish for the purpose during the Tender Offer Period, 100% of the fully diluted share capital of SPI (the "Shares")

The Tender Offer shall commence at 9.00 a.m on April 12, 2004 and end at 3 00 p.m. on May 7, 2004 (the "Tender Offer Period") The Shares are intended to be crossed on the PSE on May 20, 2004.

Should any of the business days during the period from April 12, 2004, the commencement of the Tender Offer Period and May 20, 2004, the Cross Date, inclusive, be officially declared a non-working holiday after the filing of the Tender Offer Report (SEC Form 19-1) on April 5, 2004, the period shall be extended by the number of business days corresponding to those which were declared as non-working holidays.

The purchase price for the acquisition of the Shares is US$87 230 million or US$0 2794 for each share and will be payable in US Dollars SPI's shareholders who wish to convert their US Dollar proceeds into Philippine Pesos at the exchange rate to be quoted by Hongkong Shanghai Banking Corporation (the "Paying Agent") should so indicate in their Application to Tender. The exchange rate will be equivalent to the weighted average rate of all the Philippine Peso/US Dollar trades transacted at the Philippine Dealing System as of 11:30 a.m. one business day prior to the payment date for the tendered SPI shares, minus PhP0 05 for every US$1.00

ATR-Kim Eng Capital Partners, Inc., the Bidder's advisor, has received confirmation from the legal counsel to TH Lee Putnam Ventures, L P., who owns 100% of the Bidder, and TH Lee Putnam Parallel Ventures, L P (the "Funds") that, based solely on the records of the Funds as of March 22, 2004, the Funds have an aggregate of approximately US$349.7 million in uncalled capital commitments which may be called upon with ten business days prior written notice. The foregoing confirmation indicates that resources are available to the Bidder sufficient to satisfy full acceptance of the Tender Offer.

The Bidder intends to pay the tendered and accepted shares on May 20, 2004 Payments for the tendered and accepted shares shall be made available by the Paying Agent for pick up by the tendering shareholders after 3.00 p.m. of May 20, 2004 at the following address: HSBC Trust Department, 30/F Discovery Centre, 25 ADB Avenue, Ortigas Centre, Pasig City. Contact person: Junji Arias (63-2) 683-2743

Every shareholder of SPI is entitled to tender all or a portion of his/its Shares for acceptance and purchase by the Bidder, subject to the Terms of the Tender Offer, copies of which will be sent to all Shareholders.

Tendering Shareholders who hold stock certificates ("Scrip Shareholders") should submit within the Tender Offer Period their duly endorsed stock certificates and the duly accomplished Application together with the following requirements to ATR-Kim Eng Securities, Inc. (the "Depository"), 17th Floor, Tower One & Exchange Plaza, Ayala Avenue, Makati City, Telephone No. (63-2) 849-8888 (Contact Person: Nilaida S. Enriquez):

If you are an INDIVIDUAL SHAREHOLDER, please submit the following, personally or through your attorney-in-fact	If you are a CORPORATE SHAREHOLDER, Please submit the following
1. Two (2) valid identification cards containing the photo and specimen signature of the shareholder.	1. Certified true copies of the Articles of Incorporation and By-laws of the shareholder and latest amendment/s thereof.
2. For shareholders acting through an attorney-in-fact, a duly notarized Special Power of Attorney substantially in the form prescribed by the Bidder (*N.B.* Endorsement of stock certificate/s must be made by the shareholder himself).	2. A notarized Secretary's Certificate substantially in the form prescribed by the Bidder setting forth resolutions of the tendering shareholder's Board of Directors authorizing the tender and sale of SPI Shares and designating the signatories for the purpose.
3. A duly accomplished signature card containing the specimen signature of the shareholder and verified by his broker (the name of the broker and the broker's signatory must be specified) or officer of the bank (the name of the bank and the bank's officer must be specified) where he is maintaining an account.	3. A duly accomplished signature card containing the specimen signatures of its authorized signatories validated by the Corporate Secretary and verified by its broker (the name of the broker and the broker's signatory must be specified) or officer of the bank (the name of the bank and the bank's officer must be specified) where it is maintaining an account.

For the convenience of Scrip Shareholders based in Visayas and Mindanao, SPI shares may be tendered by submitting the foregoing requirements at the Cebu and Davao branch offices of the Depository not later than April 30, 2004.

ATR-Kim Eng Securities, Inc.
Cebu Branch
Mezzanine Floor, TPG Center
Escario cor. F. Ramos Sts.
Cebu City
Telephone No.: (63-32) 255-1888
Contact Person: [Cheryl M. Lim]

ATR-Kim Eng Securities, Inc.
Davao Branch
Dr. #7 M.T. Aquino Building
Cabaguio Avenue Corner
Bolcan Street, Davao City
Telephone No.: (63-82) 224-2860
Contact Person: Miguel Luis R. Aquino

After said dates, Scrip Shareholders in Visayas and Mindanao may tender their shares only with the Depository's head office in Makati City.

The Depository will submit the share certificates for validation to SPI's Stock Transfer Agent: Union Bank of the Philippines, c/o Mr Moises L. Almanon, Jr , 3rd Floor, SSS Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City, Telephone No. (63-2) 893-8584 or (63-2) 892-0011, Local 2351/2352). Defective applications (*e g.*, with discrepancy between the specimen signatures on file and the endorsement) must be corrected within the Tender Offer Period to avoid being rejected by the Bidder Hence, shareholders are strongly urged against tendering at the last minute to allow sufficient time to correct any deficiency in their application. Shareholders are also urged to indicate their telephone numbers in their respective application forms to allow the Depository to inform them immediately of any deficiency in their applications

Tendering shareholders whose shares are lodged with the Philippine Central Depository Nominee Corporation ("PCD") ("Scripless Shareholders") should instruct their brokers to electronically transfer their shares to ATR-Kim Eng Securities, Inc (the "Broker") for receipt by the Broker prior to 3 00 p m of May 7, 2004 The Broker shall hold the tendered common shares only as custodian for said shares

Tendering shareholders shall have the right to withdraw any tendered shares at any time during the Tender Offer Period For a withdrawal to be effective, a written notice of withdrawal must be received by the Depository (for Scrip Shareholders) or by the Broker (for Scripless Shareholders) before 3 00 p m of May 7, 2004

Copies of SEC Form 19-1 and the tender offer application kit may be obtained by Shareholders from the Depository/Broker at their addresses stated above. Copies of SEC Form 19-1 may also be downloaded by the Shareholders from SPI's website www.spitech.com Copies of this letter, along with the Application and the attachments, will be sent to the shareholders of record as of March 16, 2004 by personal delivery or registered mail

For inquiries about the Bidder or the Tender Offer, please contact **Platon Martinez Flores San Pedro & Leaño** at (63-2) 887-4696 or **Ms. Nilaida Enriquez** of the Depository at its address set forth earlier in this letter

(PDI April 12 13 & 14 2004)

Rhyme does not pay

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal

WILL she or will she not? This question sums up the biggest guessing game in business town nowadays.

You see, it's only about 17 days to go until Labor Day, which we hold every May 1, including election years.

Setting aside only one day of the year for workers, I think, is a good practice for a country which has close to 11 million jobless.

Our economy may be falling behind in our region, but on Labor Day, we can feel on top of the world from the wonderful speeches from our politicos.

Nearing Labor Day, you see, it is a good time as any for labor groups to call for the ever-popular vote-getting political announcement—you know, a wage increase.

Thus, in business, they are holding their breath on what, er, "gift" this cute administration of Gloriaetta will again come up with on Labor Day.

* * *

IN case you did not notice, lately, the press release factory in Malacañang has been churning stories about Gloriaetta's supposed "gifts" to the people.

Recently, you might have read about Gloriaetta's gift of EDUCATION. From what I gathered, the time came directly from the Malacañang factory.

Never mind that, under this cute administration, the allotment for education actually went down as a portion of total budget.

Only six years ago in 1998, education accounted for roughly 20 percent of the total budget.

Under this cute gift-giving administration of Gloriaetta, the share of education in the total budget goes down to only 15 percent this year.

Whether or not the drop had anything to do with presidential candidate Raul Roco, who used to be the education secretary of Gloriaetta, is hard to say.

***

WELL, the point is that this cute administration of Gloriaetta warns us against what it calls "kitchenomics" of other presidential candidates like Roco.

And so what kind of economics does it practice—the credit grabbing kind? The supposed "GIFT" of education is fine! We need it to find jobs abroad.

But I don't think it is right to call it a gift from Gloriaetta. The money which which the government spends on education still comes from our taxes.

It's not as if the education money came from the big fat secret bank accounts of Jose Pidal.

***

SORRY—I just wanted that out of my chest! And we are actually talking about the possible "gift" from Malacañang on Labor Day.

In business, particularly those with many workers, they fear the "gift" will have something to do with other people's money again.

You see, the biggest issue in business in the next few weeks will be the wage increase, following calls from labor groups, mostly addressed to...well, Malacañang.

It looks like we are back to the good old days of chain reaction which will lead eventually to wage increases.

Oil prices went up, and with the government giving in to the demand of public transport sectors (i.e. voters) for higher fare, could a wage increase be far behind?

You see, even with the deregulation of the oil industry, everything else is still controlled by the government, except the pump prices of fuel, which are now controlled by the oil industry. Do you see any price difference anywhere? They are all the same, right?

* * *

IN business, as expected, they are saying that the timing for a wage increase is not right, although nobody said anything about when should be the right time for an increase.

Frankly, I don't mind a pay increase, particularly for contractual rhyme workers like me, since I never had any increase since 1992. What's that—rhyme does not pay? But I am only joking, boss!

Still, a study done by Ecop, or the Employers Confederation of the Philippines, should be a good guide for our policy makers.

It showed that for the past 15 years, or since the time of Tita Cory, we have been increasing wages every year, except in 1992 and in 1995.

In all those years, the total pay increase amounted to some 170 percent, meaning that the minimum wages went up by more than one and a half times.

Such a big jump nevertheless was not accompanied by an increase in productivity. As a matter of fact, in those 15 years, productivity even dropped.

***

WHAT does it mean? In business, they are saying that we are losing out to our neighbors. In short, we cannot compete.

Our wages, you see, are roughly five times those in China, which is taking away all the business in the region. Our wages are even higher than those in Thailand and Indonesia.

Thus, in business, they are talking about competitiveness. A survey of 30 countries which are in the same level as ours puts the Philippines at the 22nd spot.

Only two years ago in 2002, the same survey showed the Philippines at the 18th place. In just one year we were able to move four slots down. Wow!

And by the way, as far as infrastructure, under this cute administration of Gloriaetta, which detests "kitchenomics," we also managed to place last.

***

THAT is the worry in business, and I have a feeling that big business will try to put it across to this cute administration during the forthcoming Ecop affair, which happens before labor day.

Every year, Ecop holds a two-day national conference. This year, it will be held on April 21 and 22, just before Labor Day, and the keynote speaker will be Gloriaetta.

It is a good time as any for business to lobby against a wage increase. There are signs that Gloriaetta is still trying to win some cuteness points.

What if, with no rhyme or reason, Malacañang just brings out another "gift" on Labor Day, and it announces a new round of pay increase, can business afford it?

Surely, some businesses will try to adjust by laying off workers.

That will add to the 5 million jobless, a figure which the government insists on, based on an official unemployment rate of 11 percent, although private sector estimates the unemployment rate at 16 percent.

* * *

ON April 21 and 22, National Conference of Employers, as sponsored by Ecop, has this for its theme: "Forging Winning Social Partnership For Global Competitiveness."

Before you shoot the people who came up with all that rubbish, let me say that it has something to do, again, with our fighting chance as a country to do business with the rest of the world.

One problem which the organizers wanted to tackle in the conference is the Supreme Court.

Slated to give a talk during the conference is Supreme Court Justice Artemio Panganiban.

Maybe the good justice will explain why the Supreme Court cannot avoid meddling with all sorts of business contracts, as it rules on every case which comes its way, even if it has no expertise on the matter at hand.

But then again maybe not. The Supreme Court never bothered to explain itself to the public. Why should it bother now, right?

AQUA LINK 2004
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"New Dimensions in Philippine Fisheries"
April 22-23, 2004
Philippine International Convention Center (PICC)

TENTATIVE PROGRAM (as of April 12, 2004)

DAY 1 - April 22 (Thursday)

8 00 am - 9 00	REGISTRATION (Venue Main Lobby)
9 00 - 9.45	OPENING OF EXHIBITS (Venue BFAR Setting, Main Lobby) • Cutting of the Ribbon Hon. Luis P. Lorenzo, Jr., *Secretary Department of Agriculture* Mrs. Ma. Elena Y. Lorenzo, *President, DA-CLEAN Foundation* Mr. Cesar M. Drilon, *Undersecretary Livestock, Fisheries & Regulations* Atty Malcolm I. Sarmiento, Jr., *Director, Bureau of Fisheries & Aquatic Resources* Mr. Mamerto E. Ellorin, *Executive Director, National Agricultural and Fishery Council* • Tour of Exhibits OPENING PROGRAM (Venue. Meeting Rm. 5) • Invocation • National Anthem • Welcome Remarks Director Malcolm I. Sarmiento, Jr. • Introduction of the Keynote Speaker Undersecretary Cesar M. Drilon • Keynote Speech Secretary Luis P. Lorenzo, Jr.
9 45 - 10 00	BREAK
PRODUCTION ENHANCEMENT - AQUACULTURE	
10.00 - 11 00	Situation & Prospects of the Aqua Feeds Industry Mr Jonathan Nacario, *Philippine Feedmillers Association*
11:00 - 12 00 nn	Profitability of Lantay Seaweed Farming Mr Maximo Ricohermoso, *MCPI Corp.*
12 00 - 1.00 pm	LUNCH (Venue Banquet Hall)
1:00 - 2:00	Environment Friendly Shrimp Culture Mr. Dan Baliao, *SEAFDEC-AQD*
2 00 - 3.00	Saline Tilapia Commercialization Mr. Westley Rosario, *NIFTDC*
3 00 - 3:15	BREAK
SPS FOOD SAFETY REQUIREMENTS	
3:15 - 4:00	Export Requirements & Development Plan for Aquamarine Products Mr Amado Emagan, *DTI-BOI*
4:00 - 4:45	SPS & HACCP Accreditation Ms Consuelo Baltazar, *BFAR*
4:45 - 5:30	Food Safety Codex Standard That Impact Fishery Products Dr. Alicia Lustre, *Food Development Center*

DAY 2 - April 23 (Friday)

PRODUCTION ENHANCEMENT - MARINE FISHERIES	
9 00 am - 10 00	Lambaklad Fishery Mr Benebert Fernando, *BFAR*
10 00 - 10.15	BREAK
10 15 - 11.15	Giant Squid Jig Technology Mr Benebert Fernando, *BFAR*
POSTHARVEST TECHNOLOGY	
11.15 - 12.00 nn	Harnessing Postharvest Technology Toward Market Competitiveness Dr Leonarda Mendoza, *UP-Visayas*
12 00 - 1:00 pm	LUNCH (Venue. Banquet Hall)
CREDIT FACILITIES	
1.00 - 1:30	LBP Program on Fisheries Project Ms. Gilda Pico, *Land Bank of the Philippines*
1:30 - 2:00	DBP - NTC Soft Loan Assistance to RP
2 00 - 2 30	QUEDANCOR Fisheries Financing Program Mr Nelson Buenaflor *Quedan and Rural Credit Guarantee*
2 30 - 3 00	PNB Financing Program for Fisheries Mr Roy Orsolino, *Philippine National Bank*
3 00 - 3 15	BREAK
MARKET OPPORTUNITES	
3 15 - 3 45	Seaweeds Mr Oscar Monzales, *Seaweed Industry Association of the Philippines*
3:45 - 4:15	Bangus Mr Jimmy To, *Bangus Association of the Philippines*
4:15 - 1:45	Tilapia Mr Rene Tayag, *Feedworld, Inc.*
4.45 - 5.15	Tuna
CLOSING	Director Malcolm I. Sarmiento, Jr.

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FPI wants immediate Meralco refund

THE FEDERATION of Philippine Industries yesterday called on the Manila Electric Co. to refund large customers through an immediate reduction of their monthly bills.

The group was referring to the fourth and final phase of a P30-billion refund to customers, which the Supreme Court ordered last year.

The amount represents income tax charges passed on to customers between February 1994 and April 2003. Phase 4 would cost Meralco P18.6 billion.

In a press statement, FPI president Jesus L. Arranza urged the utility giant to implement an immediate, programmed reduction in the current billing of manufacturing companies.

"Industries are the biggest consumers of (electricity)," Arranza said.

"There are companies that have reduced their operations due to the high costs of production, which include power costs."

He said some large manufacturers were spending as much as P80 million per month for electricity.

Arranza added: "Effecting the Meralco refund through a programmed reduction in the monthly billings of these enterprises as soon as possible, will go a long way to reduce costs and help companies become more globally competitive and preserve or create jobs."

Last month, the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry said it was considering to press for an option for large electricity users to convert part of the refund into Meralco shares.

PCCI executive vice president Donald Dee said in a press briefing the group had been tasked by other business organizations to take the lead in determining how the refund should be done.

For residential users, Meralco had either given out the refund to customers or credited the amount to future bills. *Ronnel W. Domingo*

BOI tightens investment rules on auto projects

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE BOARD of Investments has increased the investment requirement on vehicle makers seeking pioneer status to $100 million from $20 million. This was contained in the guidelines governing the 2004 Investment Priorities Plan, the list of the government's preferred investment areas.

Pioneer status affords beneficiaries incentives such as exemption on import duties and tax holidays.

According to a BOI document, the required minimum exports to qualify for pioneer status was also raised to 10,000 completely built units of passenger cars and commercial vehicles from only 1,000 units a year. Bus makers need to export at least 500 CBUs yearly.

The guidelines allow investment projects that include acquisition of existing assets or facilities.

For motorcycle makers, the required minimum investment was set at $4 million and exports at 30,000 CBUs a year.

Also, the guidelines on pioneer status provided that incremental investments for modernization or expansion projects on vehicle assembly be at least $20 million for cars, commercial vehicles and buses and $1 million for motorcycles.

Manufacturers of generic vehicles that are designed or suited solely for the Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) market also qualify for pioneer status.

All applicants, however, must be registered participants under Executive Order No. 156 or the motor vehicle development program.

For vehicle parts makers, the following projects may qualify for pioneer status:

- manufacturing of transmission, engines, as well as tool and die for chassis and engine making;
- cross-border investment or merger between companies across borders involving a strong component company merging with a weak Philippine-based firm, provided that the surviving company would make use of local facilities for global sourcing;
- common facilities for forging parts and components for motor vehicles, and
- supporting industries for the manufacture of transmission or engine or common service facilities for forging or motor vehicle parts and components, provided that the support industries would have supply and/or service contracts with the latter; design customized for Asian needs in autos, trucks and buses.

DBCC coming out with new revenue measures for '05

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE INTERAGENCY Development Budget Coordination Committee is mapping out measures that would generate P50 billion in fresh revenue to shore up its budget position next year.

According to a confidential DBCC document, the government aims to finalize the revenue measures during its meeting this week.

The document detailed the agreements arrived at during the March 31 meeting of the DBCC executive technical board.

"The increase in revenues will finance the planned increase in government salaries," said a source from the Department of Finance.

Aside from the fresh revenue measures, which include those in need of legislation as well as some administrative measures, the DBCC is also finalizing its program to minimize tax incentives.

Department of Finance sources estimated that, on top of additional revenue from the new measures, the fiscal incentive rationalization program could also yield P2 to P4 billion.

One of the measures expected to boost government revenues by next year is the long-awaited indexation of excise taxes on "sin" products like beer and alcohol.

This reform, which even the International Monetary Fund has been pushing for, is expected to yield P13 billion.

Another controversial measure being proposed is the imposition of tax on SMS (short messaging system) text messaging.

One DOF source said that this measure, which was being supported by some of the presidential candidates, could yield a low of P1.8 billion to a high of P18 billion.

Tower Awards extends deadline

THE DEADLINE for submission of entries to the Tower Awards 2004 (The Outstanding Workers of the Republic) jointly sponsored by the Rotary Club of Manila and Metrobank Foundation Inc. was extended to April 15.

The awarding ceremonies will be held on June 3, 2004 at The Peninsula Manila Rigodon Ballroom. Tower Awards honors the country's most outstanding non-supervisory blue collar and white collar workers (both men and women) in the areas of basic industries, manufacturing, services, distribution/maintenance and government, community and social services (including NGOs).

Each winner will receive P50,000 in cash, a Tower Awards trophy, Baccalaureate Degree from the Technological University of the Philippines (TUP), full scholarship for a bachelor degree and one-week accommodation at The Peninsula Manila with spouse.

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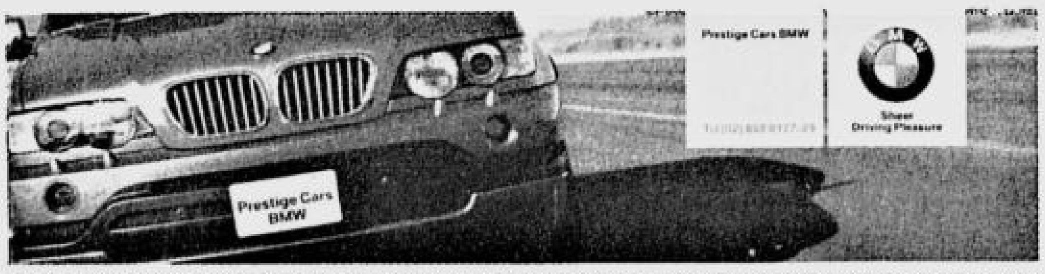

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PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of PLACIDO NERA has been extrajudicially settled among his heirs as per Doc. No. 269; Page No. 55, Book No. XIX; Series of 2004 of Notary Public for Makati City Atty. Nazario Regino
(PDI-April 6,13 & 20, 2004)

NOTICE OF LOSS

NOTICE is given that the estate of the late PEDRO DELOS REYES was extrajudicially settled with waiver among his heirs before Not. Public Hector B. Centeno as per Doc #84, Page 17, Book 1035, Series of 2004.
(PDI-April 6, 13 & 20, 2004)

Notice is hereby given of the loss of Univ of East Cert. Nos. 5311, 6880, 7734, 8700, 9800, 10959, all in the name of Victor A. Arches (17 shares), Cert Nos 5310, 6879, 7733, 8699, 9799 10958, all in the name of Minda N. Arches (17 shares) and Cert Nos. 5330, 6064, 6212, 6881, 7735, 8701, 9801, 10960, 12073, 12754, 13605, all in the name of Victor A. Arches and/or Minda N. Arches (67 shares). Should no one contest after one year, new certificates will be issued.
(PDI-April 6, 13, 20 & 27, 2004)

Republic of the Philippines
CAMARINES NORTE STATE COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Daet, Camarines Norte

announces the opening of the position of

SUC PRESIDENT I

Minimum Qualifications
- A Filipino Citizen
- Preferably a holder of an earned doctoral degree
- Preferably not more than 60 years old at the time of the application
- Has at least five (5) years of relevant managerial & administrative experience
- Morally upright

In addition, nominees/interested applicants are required to make a full disclosure of all (filed, pending or resolved) administrative, criminal and civil cases, if any, through the following clearances / certifications:
- Sandigan Bayan
- Civil Service Commission
- Other Courts

Application/Nomination should be accompanied by:
- Detailed Curriculum Vitaé and documentary evidences supportive of qualification
- Statement of vision, mission and thrusts of the Camarines Norte State College
- Neuro-Psychiatric Exam
- Medical Certificate
- Drug test by an accredited health institution/center by Department of Health

Interested applicants/nominees are requested to submit six (6) copies of formal application, and all requirements on or before May 15, 2004 to:

Cristina Damasco Padolina
Commissioner, CHED and
Chairman-Designate, CNSC Board of Trustees
c/o Jennilyn M. Salubayba
5/F, DAP Bldg., San Miguel Ave., Ortigas Center, Pasig City
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TransCo
National Transmission Corporation

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
AD NO. MMD-TRANSCO 2004-021

PD Ref. No.: PB040318-PP0043
PR Nos.: ITASD-03-004186/005290

1. The **NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION, BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE (TRANSCO – BAC) – HEAD OFFICE**, invites local bidders/contractors to apply for eligibility who are:
   a. Duly licensed Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships; or
   b. Partnerships duly organized under the laws of the Philippines and of which at least sixty percent (60%) of the interest belongs to citizens of the Philippines; or
   c. Corporations duly organized under the laws of the Philippines, and of which at least sixty percent (60%) of the outstanding capital stock belongs to citizens of the Philippines; or
   d. Manufacturers, suppliers and/or distributors forming themselves into a joint venture, i.e., group of two (2) or more manufacturers, suppliers and/or distributors that intend to be jointly and severally responsible or liable for a particular contract; Provided, however, that Filipino ownership or interest of the joint venture concerned shall be at least sixty percent (60%); or
   e. Cooperatives duly registered with the Cooperatives Development Authority (CDA).
2. Procurement of :
   Supply, Delivery, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Stationary Single Cell Batteries, 250 AH and 300 AH Vented Lead Acid Type
3. The contract to be performed by the successful bidder shall be specified in the attached Technical Quotation Form of the Bid Documents.
   The Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to be Bid is as follows:
   SCHEDULE 1 : FIVE HUNDRED FORTY FIVE THOUSAND PESOS (PhP 545,000.00)
   SCHEDULE 2 : NINE MILLION NINE HUNDRED TEN THOUSAND PESOS (PhP 9,910,000.00)
   to be sourced from the internal Cash Generation of TransCo.
4. The Bid Documents will be available for issuance starting ***April 8, 2004 to May 19, 2004*** at the BAC Secretariat Office, National Transmission Corporation, Materials Management Division (MMD), Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City upon payment of non-refundable fee of **Five Hundred Pesos** (P500.00) per set.
5. Pre-Bid Conference will be held on ***May 07, 2004 at 10:00 A.M.*** at the Admin Conference Room, G/F, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City.
6. Deadline for submission, receipt and opening of bids shall be on or before ***10:00 A.M. of May 20, 2004*** at the Admin Conference Room, Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Ave. corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City. If the date falls on a non-working day or declared non-working day, the deadline for submission shall be moved to the next working day immediately following said date. Late submission and/or incomplete bid documents shall not be accepted.
7. All particulars relative to the eligibility, bidding, evaluation of bids and award of contract shall be governed by the Implementing Rules and Regulations-A of Republic Act 9184.
8. TransCo reserves the right to reject any Application for Eligibility or all bids without offering any reasons, waive any required formality therein, and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the Corporation.
9. Additional information shall be furnished upon request. All communications should be addressed to the undersigned at the aforementioned address.

(Sgd.) ANTONIO G. LABAYANI
Chairman, Bids and Award Committee

(PDI April 6 & 13, 2004)

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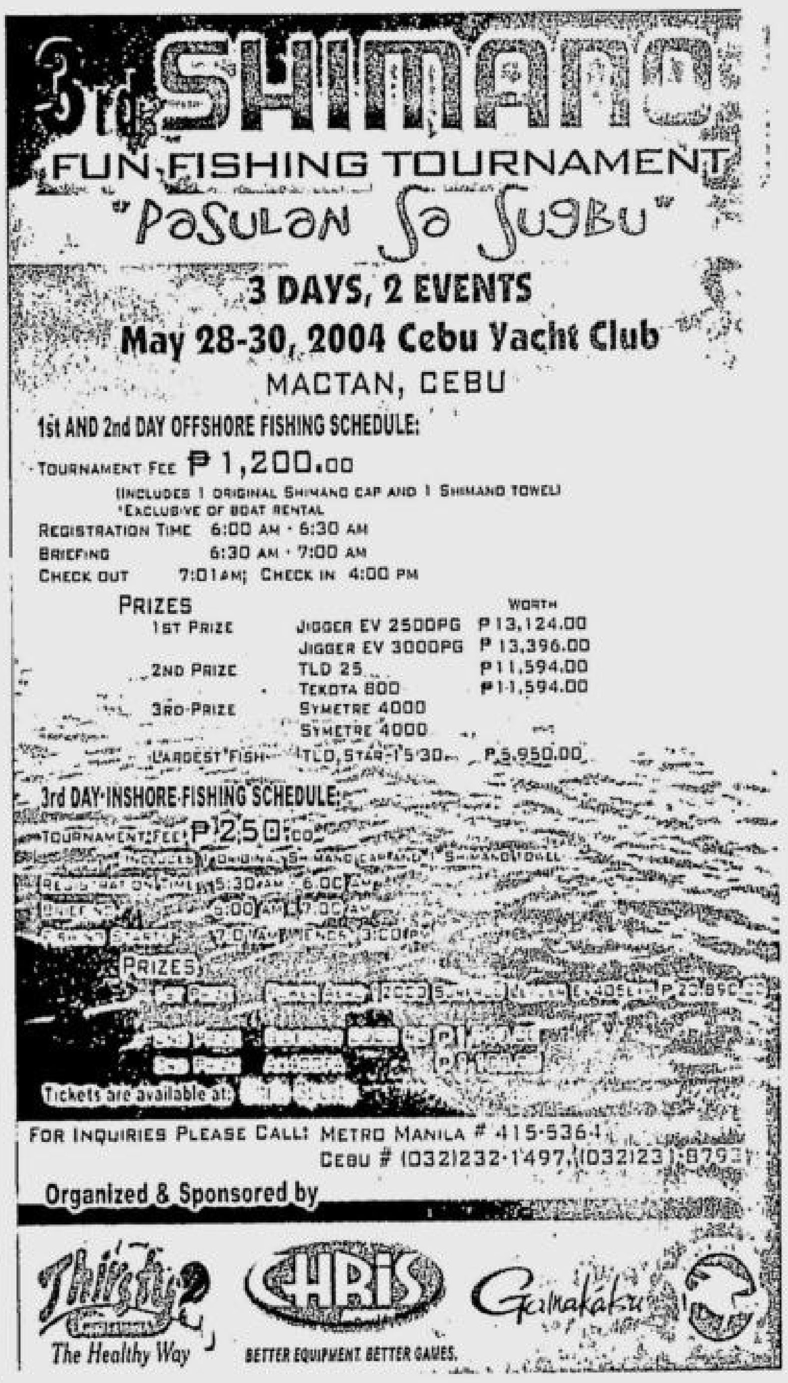

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3RD PRIZE	SYMETRE 4000	
	SYMETRE 4000	
LARGEST FISH	TLD STAR 15 30	P 5,950.00

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TOURNAMENT FEE P250.00
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5:30 AM - 6:00 AM
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"Let the words of my mouth meet your Favor, keep the thoughts of my heart before you, Lord, my rock, my redeemer..."

— Psalm 21:15

Our Dearly Beloved Papa

Manuel "Let" Sayo Songco

Peacefully joined his Creator on April 10, 2004
at the age of 52.

His loving wife **Carmen "Meng"** ; children **Paolo, Anna Andrea** and **Sarah Patricia**; daughter-in-law **Lorena**; grandchild **Hans Vincent**; Parents **Jesus** and **Carmen**; sister **Evelyn**; brothers **Eduardo** and **Carmelo**; sister-in-law **Noemi**; niece **Nicole**; mother-in-law **Inocencia C. Salac**; sisters-in-law **Flory** and **Julie**; brother-in-law **Rey**; other relatives and friends request the pious reader to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Chapel C of La Funeraria Paz, G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, April 17, 2004 at The Heritage Park, Fort Bonifacio, after the 8:00 a.m. Mass at Chapel C.

ANGELA TIMONER ELLA

"Geling"

Died in the Peace of the Lord on April 10, 2004
at the age of 77.

Her children **Alberto** and **Alice Ella, Catalina** and **Joey Lee, Dadi** and **Randy Cerezo**; grandchildren **Benedict, Joan, Paul, Joy, Renzo, Katrina Marie, Niko Bryan, Daryl, Ivan Jude** and **John Angelo**; nephews and nieces, relatives and friends request your prayers for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie at their residence in Lag-On, Daet, Camarines Norte.

Interment will be on Thursday, April 15, 2004, 2 p.m. at Daet Cemetery.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

Always caring...
INQUIRER OBITUARIES

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
❶ Copy of Death Certificate
❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

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CLASSIFIEDS

TransCo
National Transmission Corporation

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
AD NO. MMD-TRANSCO 2004-021

PD Ref. No.: PB040115-EL0004

1. The **NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION, BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE (TRANSCO – BAC) – HEAD OFFICE**, invites local bidders/contractors to apply for eligibility who are:
    a. Duly licensed Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships; or
    b. Partnerships duly organized under the laws of the Philippines and of which at least sixty percent (60%) of the interest belongs to citizens of the Philippines; or
    c. Corporations duly organized under the laws of the Philippines, and of which at least sixty percent (60%) of the outstanding capital stock belongs to citizens of the Philippines; or
    d. Manufacturers, suppliers and/or distributors forming themselves into a joint venture, i.e., group of two (2) or more manufacturers, suppliers and/or distributors that intend to be jointly and severally responsible or liable for a particular contract; Provided, however, that Filipino ownership or interest of the joint venture concerned shall be at least sixty percent (60%); or
    e. Cooperatives duly registered with the Cooperatives Development Authority (CDA).
2. Procurement of :
    DESIGN, SUPPLY, DELIVERY, INSTALLATION, TESTING & COMMISSIONING OF DIGITAL VIDEO RECORDER SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM
3. The contract to be performed by the successful bidder shall be specified in the attached Technical Quotation Form of the Bid Documents that will be issued.
    The Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to be Bid is *P 895,000.00* to be sourced from the Internal Cash Generation of TransCo.
4. The Bid Documents will be available for issuance starting *April 6, 2004 to May 3, 2004* at the BAC Secretariat Office, National Transmission Corporation, Materials Management Division (MMD), Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City upon payment of non-refundable fee of **Five Hundred Pesos (P500.00)** per set.
5. Pre-Bid Conference will be held on *April 22, 2004 at 10:00 A.M.* at the Admin Conference Room, Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City.
6. Deadline for submission, receipt and opening of bids shall be on or before *10:00 A.M. of May 4, 2004* at the Admin Conference Room, Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Ave. corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City. If the date falls on a non-working day or declared non-working day, the deadline for submission shall be moved to the next working day immediately following said date. Late submission and/or incomplete application shall not be accepted.
7. All particulars relative to the eligibility, bidding, evaluation of bids and award of contract shall be governed by the Implementing Rules and Regulations-A of Republic Act 9184.
8. TransCo reserves the right to reject any Application for Eligibility or all bids without offering any reasons, waive any required formality therein, and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the Corporation.
9. Additional information shall be furnished upon request. All communications should be addressed to the undersigned at the aforementioned address.

(Sgd.) ANTONIO G. LABAYANI
Chairman, Bids and Award Committee

(PDI – April 6 & 13, 2004)

National Power Corporation

April 6, 2004

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
(Amended Advertisement)

The National Power Corporation (NPC), in line with the directives of the Department of Energy of the Republic of the Philippines, invites interested consultants to apply for Eligibility and to bid for the Consulting Services for the Engineering Study of Base Load Coal Power Projects to be used as investment guide for the private sector participation in building new power plants.

The Eligibility Criteria of this project shall be based on Republic Act No 9184 (The Government Procurement Reform Act) and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR-A).

The services shall include, but not limited to the following:

a) Site Selection Study — this stage shall cover the establishment of criteria, mapping, and table surveys, site reconnaissance, evaluation and ranking of alternative sites and decision on the final site for further investigation.
b) Fuel Supply Study — this shall include establishment of fuel to be used, the source and the required specifications, definition of the method/s of deliveries and storage, determination of the cost and selection of the best alternative.
c) Plant Optimization Study — this deals with optimization of unit capacities, plant systems, equipment, fresh water supply system, associated transmission lines and distribution facilities and others.
d) Plant Layout — it includes preparation of preliminary site development plan.
e) Plant Design Configuration — it includes preparation of conceptual plant and equipment design, systems descriptions and general technical specifications based on the outcome of the optimization study.
f) Project Cost Estimates — includes preparation of preliminary project's cost estimates.
g) Economic and Financial Evaluation — it includes analysis of the viability of the project

Prospective Consultants shall be evaluated as to eligibility based on the non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria prescribed in the eligibility requirements. Eligible Consultants shall be short listed to seven (7) based on the criteria stated in the eligibility documents.

NPC is alloting a budget amounting to P10 million pesos to fund the conduct of the feasibility study for four (4) priority sites identified by NPC. The budget will be sourced from NPC internal cash fund.

Schedule of Activities

– Application and issuance of Eligibility Documents	06-26 April 2004
– Deadline for Submission of Eligibility Requirements	26 April 2004. 3:00 P.M. at Morones Room, Solanum, NPC Building
– Issuance of Tender Documents	3 May 2004
– Pre-Bid Conference	12 May 2004; 9:00 A.M at Pahiyas Room, Solanum, NPC Building
– Submission of Bids	3 June 2004, 2:00 P.M. at Pahiyas Room, Solanum, NPC Building
– Cost of Eligibility Documents	P500.00
– Cost of Tender/Bid Documents	P2,000.00

Interested consultants may obtain the eligibility statements/ forms at the Bids and Contracts Services Department (BCSD), NPC, Diliman Quezon City, Telephone No.: 924-5211 and 922-1622.

The Contracts Award Committee (CAC), NPC, reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, and to cancel the bidding process and reject all bids, at any time prior to award of contract, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder(s).

(Sgd.) SILVANO C. ZANORIA
SVP-ME & TMS and
Contracts Award Committee

(PDI – April 13, 2004)

TransCo
National Transmission Corporation
South Luzon Operations and Maintenance

April 6, 2004

INVITATION FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The National Transmission Corporation, South Luzon Operation and Maintenance invites interested Filipino contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following projects/undertakings.

Project No.	Contract Code/ Title	Location	Duration	Approved Budget for the Contract	Source of Budget	License and Registration Particulars issued by PCAB
1	Trans-04-RCSAKG-EG-07 Reinforcement of Corroded Stub Angles of Towers 73, 74, 75, 76, 77 81, 82 & 89 along Kalayaan-Gumaca 230kV Transmission Line	Laguna and Quezon	Sixty-Six (66) working days	Php 799,757.13	Internal cash Generation (ICG)	- At least "D & C. Gen. Building - At least "Small B. Building & Industrial Plant" (Power Transmission & Distribution) and or Specialties (Structural Steel)
2.	Trans-04-RCSAMK-EG-11 Reinforcement of Corroded Stub Angles of Towers 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 53 & 54 along Malaya-Kalayaan 230kV Transmission Line	Pakil, Laguna Pililla, Rizal	Eighty-Two (82) work days	Php 1,099,615.97	Internal Cash Generation (ICG)	- At least D & C. Gen. Building" - At least "Small B. Building & Industrial Plant" (Power Transmission & Distribution) and or Specialties (Structural Steel)

Prospective bidders must have at least completed a single contract similar to the contract to be bid where the major component of works in the contract involves structural steel works

Applications for Eligibility (legal, technical and financial documents and statements) shall be evaluated using "PASS/FAIL" criteria and only Eligible Bidders shall be invited by NTC in the bidding. All bids equal to or lower than the Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid shall be evaluated based on the responsiveness of the contractor's offer to the contract under bidding, and shall be subject to Postqualification before an award is made. Bid Prices submitted higher than the Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid shall be rejected and returned outright.

Application for Eligibility and Eligibility Forms will be available for issuance starting April 13, 2004 up to May 3, 2004 at the Regional Contracts Management Office, Administration Division, NTC, South Luzon Operation and Maintenance, San Vicente, Biñan, Laguna, Telefax No. 520-8213 and E-mail Address, (grlistano@transco.ph) upon presentation of Letter of Intent, original PCAB License and payment of a non-refundable fee of P600.00 per copy per project.

Deadline for submission of duly accomplished Application for Eligibility, Eligibility Forms, documents and statements shall be on or before 10:00 A.M. of May 4, 2004 which shall be submitted at the office address mentioned above. Opening and Eligibility Screening shall be held on the same date and time specified. If the date is a non-working day or declared non-working day, the deadline for submission shall be moved to the next working day immediately following said date. Late submission and/or incomplete application shall not be accepted

Prospective bidders shall signify conformance to bidding terms and conditions as required and shall ensure the same through proper submission execution. The procurement rules and regulations used in this infrastructure project shall be in accordance with the implementing rules and regulations of "R.A. 9184

NTC reserves the right to reject any Application for Eligibility or all bids without offering any reasons, waive any required formality therein, and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the government

Additional information shall be furnished upon request. All communication should be address to the undersigned at the aforementioned address.

G.R. LISTANO
Dept. Manager PSMD-North and
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI-- April 13, 2004)

Republic of the Philippines
SOCIAL SECURITY COMMISSION
Makati City

CRISTINA MAGDAONG,
Petitioner,

- versus - SSC CASE NO. 2-15449-03

SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM and
MIGHTY TRAVEL, INC., represented
by its Board of Directors, namely,
JOVENCIO JIMENEZ, JR.,
SUZETTE M. PERIQUET, IMELDA
H. SALONGA, ELEAZAR B. REYES
and ROSSAN P. ROY,
Respondents.

x - x

SUMMONS

TO : ROSSAN P. ROY
SUZETTE PERIQUET
ELEAZAR B. REYES

GREETINGS:

You are hereby required to file within fifteen (15) days from the date of publication of this Summons with the Office of the Clerk of the Commission, 12th Floor, SSS (Makati) Building, 6782 Ayala Avenue corner Rufino Street, Makati City, your Answer to the Petition filed by Cristina Magdaong on her claim for benefit accruing from the death of Alfredo Magdaong.

You are further required to serve a copy of your Answer upon the petitioner at 10 Morning Glory, Pilar Village, Las Piñas, Metro Manila, and upon Atty. Henry L. Tendido, counsel for the SSS at SSS Makati Branch Office, 355 Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City.

If you fail to answer within the time prescribed above, the Hearing Commissioner, may upon motion of the petitioner or motu-proprio, declare you in default and shall forthwith proceed to receive the petitioner's evidence ex-parte and thereafter recommend to the Commission either the granting or denial of the petition as the evidence may warrant.

SO ORDERED.

Makati City, Philippines, March 29, 2004.

SOCIAL SECURITY COMMISSION

(April 13, 2004)

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"Contact Center Innovations, Trends, Profitability & Industry Updates"

Makati Shangri-la Hotel
Rizal Ballroom C
April 16, 2004 (Friday)
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon
Registration starts at 8:00 am

P500.00 / per person*

*CFP member companies can send two (2) representatives for free
Additional representatives will be charged the corresponding fee

To confirm your attendance, please email Daniel Galupong at [illegible] or call
Lissa Camonllo at 632-885-8024 or fax this form to 632-885-8123

Please PRINT:
☐ YES. I will attend the event on April 16, 2008.
☐ NO, I won't be able to attend.
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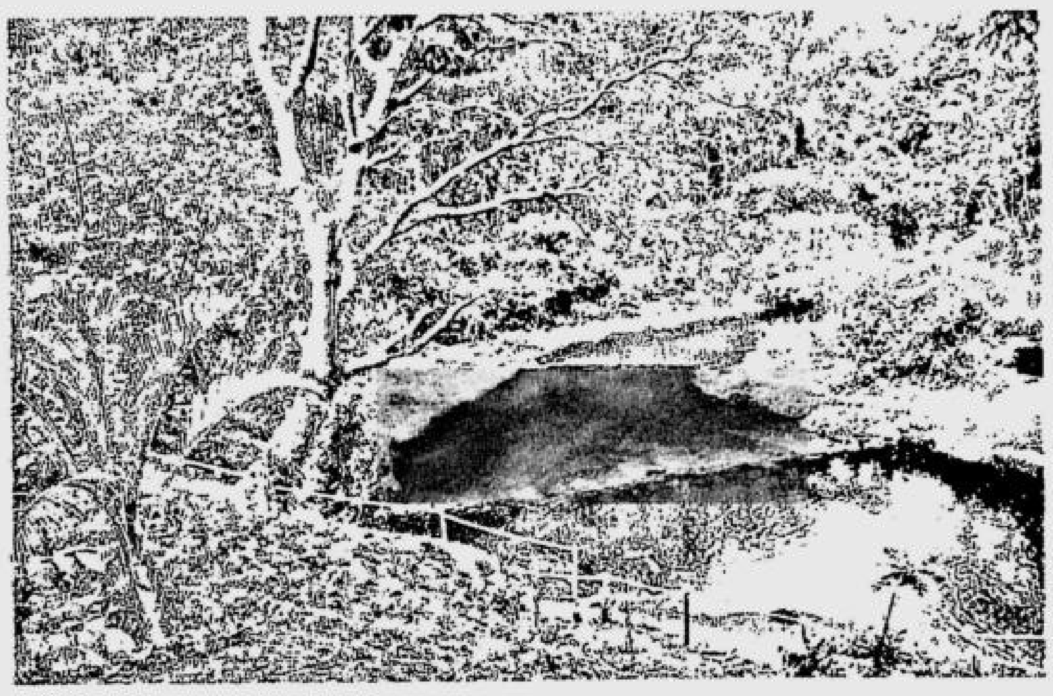
REALESTATE

E-mail: pr_real_estate@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Cesar D. Mangawang

A TREE is transplanted during the groundbreaking ceremony.


SAN Juan River is within the Monticello property.

A STIMULATING view of the river

'Nature-retreat' village near Star Tollway

Text by Tessa R. Salazar
Photos by Alex P. Loinaz

IT'S not your plain subdivision with a clubhouse.

Rising from a 55-hectare property on the Batangas towns of Sto. Tomas, Tanauan and Malvar is a subdivision that features a river spa to complement the clubhouse. The clubhouse—situated beside the San Juan River,—will even have a meditation area amid lush gardens for that complete "nature retreat" atmosphere.

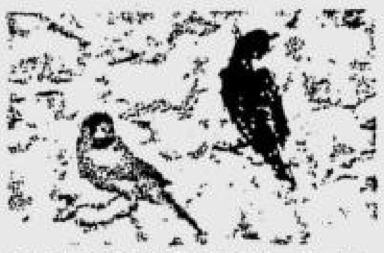
So, imagine yourself "lost" in a forest with a river close by. And you don't even have to leave the premises of your subdivision while at it.

To complete this rustic scenario, a man-made lake will lie at the heart of the property for leisure activities: fishing, strolling or jogging by the lakeside. Perhaps, you can just set up a hammock and simply relax.

Upscale project

And all these will be within what is to be called the Monticello Wooded Estates, a fully fenced upscale project by Active Group. It will be envisioned as a perfect sanctuary for the weary urbanite.

The 55-hectare property, previously owned by Active Group's joint-venture partner Goram, is just the first phase of the overall development plans. The next phase, which will involve the adjacent land (another 55 hectares), will be developed when phase 1 is completed.


NATURE-FRIENDLY Monticello will be a bird sanctuary.

MONTICELLO'S groundbreaking rites in Malvar, Batangas

Active Group will infuse P500 million for the total 110-hectare development.

The first phase will be built from 2004 to 2006. The club will be fully developed in 2008.

Public club

Architect Antonio Turalba Sr. says residents of the Monticello Wooded Estates would be proprietary members of the Villa Monticello Country Club.

Said the Active Group chair: "We will also be selling shares to the public. This is not exclusive to residents. This is partly a public club where the purpose is to serve the neighboring areas."

He expects buyers of Monticello to come mainly from Sto. Tomas, Tanauan and Malvar. He also expects other Batangueños from the rest of the province and even those from Metro Manila to come and express interest in the development.

Dev't toward the south

Why in Batangas? Says Turalba: "If you look at it, the development now is toward the south. You can see the signs, the development of the Batangas port by the government (is expected) to be bigger than the North Harbor."

Architect Cristina Turalba, an environment planner, says Monticello would serve the "rising south." Because of the Arroyo's administration's efforts to strengthen inter-island travel and commerce via the "Strong Republic Nautical Highway," Batangas and its port is now known as the jump-off point of the roll-on roll-off ferry boats (roro). The industrial parks have also relocated to the south to be near the port and ultimately be in close proximity with the Fernando Air Base in Lipa, which has been converted into an international airport to complement the port.

And to complement all these commercial activities is Monticello. "We are providing the recreational, residential requirements of the area," she says.

Active Group is also the developer of the high-end Mount Malarayat Golf and Residential estate.

Lot prices

The selling prices of the lots range from P4,200 to 4,500 per square meter and include the proprietary share of the 2.5-hectare club.

Monticello's phase 1 will offer around 450 lot cuts, with sizes of 1,200, 500, 600 and 700 square meters. A 700-sq-m lot goes for P2.5 million for an opening price. Expect that to increase, Turalba predicts, when the expected interconnection between the South Luzon Expressway and the Star Tollway pushes through.

"The absolute amount for a lot is almost P2.5 million. When you put up a house, it will be about P7 to 10 million or more," he said.

Vertical limitation

The surrounding areas of Monticello are actually zoned as industrial. Thus, instead of competing with the industrial parks, the Active Group has positioned its own development as residential and recreational.

The entire Monticello development has about 35 percent of open spaces. There is also a vertical limitation for the houses. No more than three stories can be built.

Cristina says each lot owner would be given the liberty to employ his or her own architect to build the house.

Ayala subsidiary takes middle market by storm

By Charles E. Buban

IT'S been a little over two years since Ayala Land Inc., the largest property developer in the country, launched a wholly owned subsidiary to focus on the affordable, mid-market segment.

Departing from the usual established niches of ALI (upscale market), Community Innovations Inc. set its sights on the seldom tapped yet promising segment composed of young achievers, executives and entrepreneurs, most with growing families.

Indeed with properties priced from just over a million (for lots only) to less than P8 million, CII has energized the segment to become one of the few bright spots in an otherwise gloomy real estate industry.

Says CII president Angela de Villa Lacson: "CII did a lot of studies, apart from the ones already done by ALI. Combining these, we were able to find out what interest the middle market most."

Trusted name

A trusted name equals trust in the product. CII enjoys full resource backing from its parent company despite having its own marketing, sales, planning and project development units.

This seems to be working with CII even with the presence of other attractive products in the market.

Explains Lacson: "These days, no matter how attractive your package may be, buyers will still look at the name behind the project: will they be finished on schedule, will they honor their commitments, will they still be there after the turnover. Buyers consider these things because they will commit a large portion of their life's earnings and they must make the right decision."

In the case of CII, the company follows through on their commitment by handling the property management to the Ayala Property Management Corp., the group that handles the conservation of all Ayala-owned and -developed condos, malls and other property.

"The APMC not only provides actual maintenance and repair assistance, but also helps form homeowners' associations and condo boards," reveals CII project development head Jonathan Umali.

Successful projects

The CII fame started out with the Verdana Homes located between Las Piñas City and Bacoor, Cavite.

With lots ranging from 200 to 400 square meters, Verdana Homes features a spacious clubhouse for neighborhood functions, tree-lined streets, landscaped gardens with fruit trees, fully stocked playground for children, jogging paths, basketball and tennis courts.

THE COLUMNS

Near the property, CII set up the Verdana Village Center, a 1.8-hectare commercial strip for retail and service-oriented establishments like restaurants, convenience stores, entertainment, educational and training facilities as well as sports, medical and recreational establishments.

This complete community setup proved a hit among buyers that Verdana Homes was taken up in a matter of months.

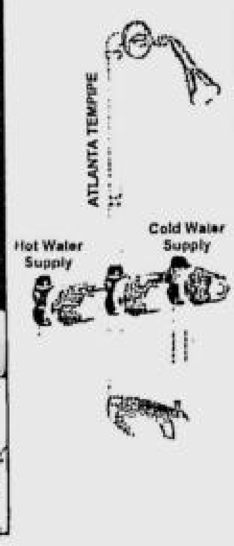
Next The Columns

With the success of the first Verdana Homes, CII focused on The Columns, Ayala Avenue, a high-rise condominium complex located right in the midst of the Makati central business district.

Comprised of a mix of studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom apartments, this three 23-story towers rise on a seven-story podium (for a total of 30 stories) with each tower housing 284 units.

At the end of the third quarter last year, the first tower, which

AYALA/ B7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BONIFACIO RIDGE

Due diligence exemplified

AYALA Land Inc.'s long-standing success in property management can be attributed to its exercise of due diligence particularly in its new acquisitions. This was recently exemplified when it took over the project management of Bonifacio Ridge, a prime residential development in Bonifacio Global City.

The 7,600-square-meter property is being aggressively marketed by ALI this year to jumpstart the projects lined up under the Fort Bonifacio Development Corp. ALI, the Campos-owned Evergreen Holdings Inc. and Greenfield Development Corp. recently took over management of FBDC to transform the Bonifacio Global City into the most modern and fully master-planned business district in the country.

Prior to the official relaunch of Bonifacio Ridge, ALI sought the expertise of its trusted structural engineering partners Aromin & Sy + Associates to review the property's design and structural components.

BONIFACIO Ridge

Design review-audit

According to engineer Jose Sy, the 6-week design review-audit involved data gathering and testing as well as analytical investigation/design review. "We coordinated with the previous structural engineers of the building then conducted our own testing and structural calculations. So far, we found it met the ALI structural and maintenance standards."

Bonifacio Ridge was subjected to exhaustive scrutiny ranging from visual inspection and random checking of structural failures or conformance to structural plans, nondestructive testing, reviews of design and specifications for code compliance, among others. Said inspection, according to Sy, was a foremost requirement for all ALI projects particularly new undertakings such as Bonifacio Ridge.

Premier residential condo

Bonifacio Ridge is a premier two-tower residential condominium that offers modern families quality home space complete with recreational facilities such as swimming pools, multipurpose hall, jogging area, toddler's play area as well as a commercial area at the ground level. Conveniently situated at the emerging Global City, it provides residents exhilarating views of verdant fairways of Manila Golf Course and the vibrant Makati CBD Skyline.

Bonifacio Ridge will be officially turnover the units to residents this October.

Model units available for viewing on-site at 1st St., Crescent Park West, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig, Metro Manila.

What to bring in your next 'tripping'

By Alexis A. Acacio

BUILDING DREAMS

MY previous columns detailed a 10-step process in finding the right home for you. The most time-consuming part of the process is visiting the pieces of property and assessing whether they would fit your needs and budget. Having an efficient and effective property assessment system would save you a lot of time and energy.

In real estate broker's parlance, the term that is used when a prospective buyer visits and inspects a property is called "tripping." This simply means that the buyer makes a "trip" to the property to fully assess whether it can deliver and satisfy the needs of the future occupants.

It is usually after Holy Week until before the school year starts in June when many families are very busy looking to rent or own. The reasons are pretty obvious. It is when the children are on vacation and can join their parents in hunting for the perfect home. During this time, the weather is also very cooperative and creates a festive mood which can be observed in the open house of housing and subdivision developers.

A typical visit to a property can take the whole day especially if the property that you are looking at is out of town. It is very important to make sure you are not wasting your time on a property you do not really want and need. Do your broker a favor by making sure that the location that you are visiting is within your requirement in terms of need and budget.

To make an effective and efficient property "tripping," here are some pieces of advice:

- **Make a Quick Checklist**

Make a list of your priorities by making a checklist. This checklist will surely make the tripping easier and more systematic. Narrow down your location choices into two or three. If your children are studying in Quezon City and it is your priority that they are near their schools, then there is no point of visiting a property in Laguna. Make a list of what you really need. This list would include the number of rooms, the number of floors and whether you would require a maid's room or not. A place for the dog is also a requirement for pet-loving families. This checklist will make your house hunting easier.

- **Bring Your Financial Calculator**

Before you start looking for a home, make sure that you know your budget. For every property that you visit, ask how much is the down payment and the monthly amortization. After visiting a property, list down all the financial details—the amount of reservation money to hold the property, any discounts, the access and availability of bank loan, the date of move in, etc. Remember that not all sellers would agree that a part of the payment should be borrowed from the bank. They simply want to sell only if the offer is in cash.

- **Have a Street Map**

A street map would come in handy so that you can easily see the infrastructures such as public offices, schools, malls, churches that are near the property that you are considering. Most buyers, after looking at a property, also look at the surrounding development. This will save a lot of time for you and your broker.

- **Bring a Measuring Tape**

A carpenter's measuring tape will do. If you are looking at interior spaces and you have specific requirements with regard to the living spaces, measuring the actual spaces will again make the decision-making process easier for you. Take note though that not all sellers welcome the idea.

- **Take Notes**

After visiting a property, take down notes. Write down the details of the property and the name and contact number of the person you have talked to at the site. This will make it easier for you to go back to one in which you may want to have a second look.

Final Note. Be free in asking as many questions as you like from the seller. After all, it is your money and you do have a right to know the facts about the property before you buy. After you have placed a property on your "top three" list, you may have to ask for advice and confirmation from the real estate professional of your choice to get an opinion on the facts you have gathered.

E-mail the author at aaacacio@pacific.net.ph.

Homeowners want to live in smaller communities

MORE homeowners today seek to live in communities that allow them to develop closer interpersonal relationships with their neighbors.

According to Tristan dela Rosa, senior vice president of Ayala Land Inc., the trend has seen the rise of smaller, more compact communities as against the larger neighborhoods of the past decades which were laid out simply in a grid and traversed by long avenues.

TAMARIND Cove represents the last phase of Ayala Alabang.

Enclaves

The newer communities are laid out in enclaves and usually have common facilities that foster social interaction, points out de la Rosa, project head of Tamarind Cove, a 1.6-hectare project within the highly successful Ayala Alabang Village community in Southern Metro Manila.

This is very much the case with this subneighborhood which represents the last phase of the Ayala-developed Muntinlupa subdivision. In response to homeowners' preferences, ALI deliberately differentiated Tamarind Cove from the rest of the subdivision, designed facilities especially for this area, and even gave it its own name, says de la Rosa.

The cozy neighborhood, which is a joint project with Bank of the Philippine Islands, is composed only of 20 lots. Half of the lots were taken up during the preselling phase. Now that the development is complete and amenities are already in place, market interest in the project is likely to heighten even more. De la Rosa notes that the initial buyers of the project are now free to begin construction of their homes.

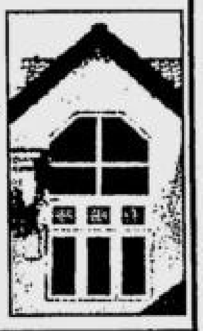
The lots are laid out in a cul-de-sac and each has easy access to a lush green strip envisioned for the use of Tamarind Cove residents. The minipark incorporates a fragrance garden, a playground, a common activity center, water features and an open lawn for kite flying and similar activities. It has a jogging path, which when incorporated with the roadway, forms a 400-meter track for running and brisk walking.

A lot of interaction

According to Pert Rodriguez, site development planner, the special strip of green is where residents and their families are expected to congregate during their free time. "It gives them room for a lot of interaction, which results in stronger community ties," he explains. On top of this mini park, Tamarind Cove homeowners will also have access to the other parks of Ayala Alabang, its two community tennis courts, six basketball courts and a swimming pool.

Moreover, Tamarind Cove has limited access. There are no roadways in the area that lead to other portions of the Alabang community. This means added privacy and better security.

"Strong community ties are good antidotes to impersonalization and feelings of isolation," De La Rosa says. "We at Ayala Land are aware of this trend and have designed our newer communities to fill this growing need."



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Ayala subsidiary . . .

From page B6

was launched in November 2002 posted a 94 percent take-up rate. The CII reported that the second tower (launched in March 2003) was already 76 percent taken up prompting the company to launch the third tower last January.

Good life within reach

According to Lacson, The Columns was conceived to bring "the good life" within reach of young urbanites looking for a place to call their own within the Makati central business district.

"The Columns' take-up rate confirms that indeed, there is a mid-range market that wants to be serviced with quality, innovative design and affordability," Lacson adds.

Apart from the many amenities that will be offered, another attraction of The Columns is its zero-down payment scheme designed to complement its already affordable standard payment schemes.

"Payment schemes can be customized to suit the needs and paying capabilities of individual buyers," says Umali.

Follow through

With the success of the first Verdana Homes, CII decided to follow it up with another one, this time in Mamplasan in Biñan, Laguna.

"CII is now bringing its highly-desired Verdana Homes residential brand to Laguna as it offers the same meticulous community planning and affordability," reveals Umali.

Verdana Homes Mamplasan, with lots ranging from 180 sq m to 500 sq m (with a modal lot size of 200 sq m), is located 15 kilometers from the Ayala Alabang and Filinvest area, off the Mamplasan Exit of the South Luzon Expressway.

Jointly developed

Serendra, on the other hand, is ALI's and CII's latest project being jointly developed with the Bases Conversion Development Authority.

As the first residential condominium project of ALI and CII inside Bonifacio Global City, Taguig, this medium-rise condominium community will cater to both middle-income and high-end markets and is expected to be completed by 2007.

Lacson reveals that CII is funding it through preselling, and part will also be taken from ALI's capital expenditures amounting to P5.6 billion.

Condominiums at Serendra are priced at between P3.4 million and P18 million, with unit sizes ranging from 36 sq m to 223 sq m.

Says Lacson: "Serendra will be a garden city located adjacent to Market! Market! (a bazaar-like development). At the center will be the residential and themed-retail outlets surrounded by expansive open space of greenery."

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BUSINESS

Fitch upgrades PLDT rating

By Clarissa S. Batino

FITCH Ratings has upgraded the rating of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.'s foreign and local borrowings to BB from BB minus, following sustained improvement in the operations and finances of the country's biggest telecom player.

Fitch believes that the financial prospects of PLDT are rosier because of the plan of its cash-rich subsidiary Smart Communications Inc. to buy debts and control of Pilipino Telephone Corp.

PLDT's rating from the London-based agency is now at par with the sovereign rating, as well as with other agency's credit marks. Standard & Poor's has kept its BB rating, while Moody's Investors Service retained its Ba2 rating of PLDT.

A rating upgrade tends to bring down the cost of the rated firm's borrowing as it indicated less risk, giving investors less reason to demand a higher return for their placements.

Fitch also upgraded the rating of PLDT's global bonds and senior notes to BB from BB minus while the rating of the local carrier's convertible preferred stock was raised to B plus from B.

"While PLDT's own financial position is weaker than the consolidated profile, Fitch notes that Smart now has greater flexibility to distribute all of its annual net income to PLDT," said the rating firm. "Given greater scope to move cash around the group, the consolidated financial position of the group as a whole is expected to have far greater bearing on PLDT's rating in the future."

Fitch pointed out that PLDT's cash-rich subsidiary is expected to continue delivering the goods for the parent firm.

Smart remitted all its P16.1 billion net income to PLDT last year, allowing the dominant carrier to post P11.2 billion in net profits despite losses of Pilipino Telephone Corp., its fixed-line business, and provisions to failed ventures.

"The ratings also consider the prospect that Smart will soon acquire a majority interest in PLDT's 45%-owned Piltel and that the entity will become re-consolidated into the PLDT group," Fitch noted.

However, the rating firm cautioned that the transaction could lead to increased leverage and weaker operating margins of Smart as well as PLDT.

Still, Fitch said, it recognized the potential operating synergies of the two cellular firm operators. Piltel is also holding billions of pesos in tax losses which Smart could use to reduce its tax payments.

Fitch's stable outlook for PLDT reflected the agency's views that neither competition nor plans to resume dividend payouts to common shareholders could affect the dominant carrier's efforts to reduce its debt level.

"PLDT currently generates healthy levels of positive free cash flow at both its principal operations: the stable fixed-line business and its rapidly growing and high-margin cellular division," according to Fitch. "Capex at each unit continues to be well managed, thus contributing to PLDT's improved consolidated and unconsolidated net free cash flow generation, to deleveraging and to greater financial flexibility—factors lacking in recent years and instrumental in previous rating downgrades."

But the rating firm stressed that it would continue to closely monitor developments, especially those related to competition as it could affect PLDT's debt profile.

PLDT's total debt stood at $2.9 billion as of end-2003, and the company said it would reduce the level by $350 to $370 million this year. Of the total obligations, PLDT accounted for about $2.5 billion while the rest are owed by Smart.

Smart is mandated by its Congressional franchise to sell 30 percent of its shares to the public this year. But PLDT said it would ask the government to allow it to defer the listing as the company still needed the dividends from Smart.

PETPlans launches pension plan in dollars

THE PRE-NEED company PETPlans Inc. recently launched a dollar pension plan which is expected to boost revenue by ten percent.

Dubbed the first of its kind in the retail market, the PET dollar pension plan assures an investment rate of return of at least 4 percent for a minimum investment of US$276.

It is available in three products: the PET$ Gold which matures in 15 years and provides cash allowance at the end of the tenth year, the PET $10 which matures in ten years, and the PET $15 which provides benefits at the end of the 15th year.

Lorenzo Ocampo, PETPlans president, said the instrument targets the overseas Filipino workers, bank clients, and planholders among others.

Officials also said the pre-need firm expects to boost total sales to P2 billion this year from more than P1 billion last year.

Of this number, new sales is expected to hit P200 million.

As of February, the pre-need firm said its initial cash from the sale of new plans grew 23% from P15 million during the same period last year. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

Leisure firm to issue shares

LEISURE firm Fantasy World Theme Parks, Amusement and Recreational Inc. will issue shares worth P722 million to its shareholder and developer ECE Realty & Development Inc. to cover for development costs of additional facilities in its Batangas theme park.

Paving the way for the secondary offering, the Securities and Exchange Commission recently approved Fantasy World's application to register additional 17,610 membership shares at P41,000 per share.

ECE Realty owns 20.33 percent of the company's present outstanding and issued 97,610 shares.

Under an agreement between Fantasy World and ECE Realty, ECE Realty will advance the costs of the development.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

The land that time forgot

MR. BEARBULL

Ron Nathan

OBVIOUSLY, I cannot write about the Stock Market this week as my last article appeared on Wednesday and the market was closed thereafter. As the editor still won't allow me to write about my adventures in a Thai massage parlor, I will have to tell you about my journey to a remote village in Pangasinan where my wife's 9 brothers and sisters live.

Just over a week ago, she received a letter, sent in March 2002, that her stepsister had fallen off a stepladder. It was given to her half brother, who is a half-wit, and he forgot to mail it.

The village is so remote that, in World War II, the Japanese did not find it. To get there, we had to take a bus to Dagupan City and that meant getting stuck in Tarlac for hours. From there, we took a jeepney to a village called Oblong, which is not on any map. Then we rode a pedicab because there are no tricycles or garages to supply petrol. When the terrain became impassable, we continued by carabao. Until then, I had never even seen one, let alone ridden on one. It was very uncomfortable and I am sure that I will never father any more children.

The village is located somewhere near the Hundred Islands. It has no electricity, telephone, newspapers, or even water, except for a well. Nobody ever goes there and land is available for 50 centavos per square meter. There are only 2 shops on the main street. One calls itself a French Bakery, but sells only pan de sal, while the other is a Karinderia called Mang Donald's—all you can eat for P10. There are also 3 funeral parlors, 2 on one side and 1 on the other, fronting the cemetery.

There are no doctors in the village because their practice would not survive, and the registered nurse left last year for Canada to become a caregiver. So there is only a *hilot* and an *albularyo*.

Because there is no electricity, there is nothing for married couples to do but make babies, and the poor woman has to deliver an average of 3 a day. In recognition of her hard work, the residents of the village bought her a bicycle.

The village is unremarkable except for the large number of coconut trees, one of which demolished my brother-in-law's house during a typhoon. My arrival caused quite a sensation, as they had never seen an alien before. Needless to say, nobody understood English and only a few people could speak Tagalog, though all the children learned it at school.

The adults kept their distance from this mysterious white alien but the children were very friendly. My daughter and I taught them how to play hide and seek, hopscotch, and several other games. We had such a good time that I "borrowed" my brother-in-law's pedicab during his siesta, and calling upon my immense vocabulary of Tagalog, said to the children, "*Pupunta tayo sa dagat.*" Immediately, about 6 kids jumped in and off to the beach we went. It was not until I tried to stop that I discovered there were no brakes and had to use my feet.

The sea was rough and the current strong so I made everyone hold hands while we waded through the sea for about a mile. We returned along the burning sand and found one store that sold Jack and Jill potato chips and Cosmos soft drinks. Believe it or not, nobody had ever heard of Coca-Cola or Pepsi-Cola. Meantime, the people in the village were very worried that I had kidnapped the children. My wife assured them that I loved kids, but they were greatly relieved when I returned with all the children looking very happy.

After that, the villagers became friendlier and called me Joe. At 6 p.m., oil lamps were lit, and while the women prepared dinner, the men sat around drinking beer and playing a simple card game called *pusoy*. They also played blackjack and everybody had a stack of 5-centavo coins, which I thought had been withdrawn from circulation. I played blackjack and won P3.50, but then I was always a high roller, even in Las Vegas.

A few men worked in the nearby fish pens but most were unemployed and sat around all day playing checkers with beer tops. Quite a few women worked in the *bagoong* factories, two had sari-sari stores and a few made or repaired clothes. Despite an obvious lack of jobs or money, I saw no signs of poverty. Every house had pigs, chickens and eggs in their backyard, and everyone grew lots of vegetables. Fish was ridiculously cheap and we bought a huge *lapu-lapu*, good for 8 people, for only P20. The healthy food and the fresh unpolluted air are obviously conducive to a long life, and my wife's grandfather is 99!

I was very uncomfortable at night because I am used to air-conditioning. My wife offered to blow me, but I think she meant blow on me. She felt amorous and wanted to make love, but I said, "We can't ... It's Lent."

"Oh," she said. "To whom and for how long?" We have always had communication problems.

I found a dust-covered brown newspaper, the last to be brought to the village. I could not read the date but on the front page, there was a picture of an American General saying, "I SHALL RETURN." Because of the lack of communication with the outside world, time has passed them by. Nobody even owns a cell phone because there is nowhere to buy batteries. That reminds me ... they have a tiny police station called Amoeba, because it only has one cell.

When we returned to Manila, I was shocked to read that in England, terrorists were planning to make a bomb containing osmium tetroxide. First of all, this is a rare chemical, hard to obtain and not particularly dangerous. They could get far better results if they used bagoong. One ton, diffused through the subway ventilation system, could decimate London.

* * *

LAST Tuesday, the degree of risk reached 99.97 and I told subscribers to SELL on the first sign of weakness. I trust they all got out yesterday. All stocks are now SELLS, except the telecom stocks, which are still being bought aggressively by foreign brokers. But even they should be sold as soon as the foreign buying dries up. I told subscribers to take their 30% profit on ABSP, made in only 6 trading days. After Dolphy apologized to the President, she agreed not to send him to Camp Crame.

The situation in Iraq is far worse than the military admits, but President Bush cannot quit in an election year so he will continue to pour reinforcements into the region. He has succeeded in rallying the whole nation against him and it will eventually end up as another Vietnam.

Yahoo came out with excellent results, earnings per share up from 8 cents to 13 cents plus a 2 for 1 stock split. The shares rose 16.3% and are on a Price/Earnings ratio of 130. To justify it, the company will have to maintain that rate of growth for the next 3 years. Is that possible? If not, we may see another tech bubble in 2005 or 2006. (*mrbearbull@hotmail.com*)

Canadian firm to start mining coal in Cebu

By Abigail L. Ho

CANADIAN firm Forum Energy Corp. will soon start coal production in Cebu, following its agreement to acquire Cebu-based Manguerra Mining and Development Corp.

"I am pleased that we have secured this important asset (the Cebu-based firm), which will add great value to our ever diversifying portfolio," according to David Robinson, Forum Energy president and chief executive, in a statement posted on the company's official website. "The Manguerra acquisition will add significant proven reserves to our balance sheet, whilst also assisting in bringing positive cash flow into the company through the extraction and sale of coal to local markets initially, and later to regional customers as production levels are increased."

Right now, Forum Energy is focusing on oil and gas exploration, owning 66.66 percent of local firm Forum Exploration Inc. The firm is currently involved in the development of the Maya Gas Field in Cebu.

However, the acquisition would only take place upon the completion of a formal due diligence audit of Manguerra's books and approval of the Department of Energy.

Since the late 70s, the family-run business produces around 1,000 tons to 2,000 tons of steam coal per month.

The Forum Energy statement said that these production levels could still be "substantially" jacked up under the new ownership and management.

According to feasibility studies conducted on the Manguerra mines in 1989 and 1998, the mines are capable of producing commercially viable coal. Its proven coal reserves are placed at around seven million tons, while potential yield has been pegged at an additional 12 million tons.

Apart from this new investment, Forum Energy said it was also looking at other large coal-bearing prospects in other parts of the country and in Indonesia.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of April 12, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	1,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	16.75	16.75	16.75	16.75	34,300
Bank of the Phil. Islands	47	47	45.5	46	57,100
China Banking Corp.	665	670	665	670	340
Citystate Savings Bank	16.25	16.25	16.25	16.25	2,400
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	41	41	41	41	8,500
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	100,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	24	24	23.5	23.75	83,100
Philippine National Bank	23.25	23.25	23.25	23.25	11,500
Phil. Savings Bank	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	15,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	24.5	24.5	24.5	24.5	11,000
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	1.06	1.08	1.06	1.08	100,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1530	1535	1530	1535	160
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	22	22	22	22	7,100
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.66	0.67	0.66	0.67	500,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	900	900	880	900	115,880
Ipeople Inc.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	80,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	21,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	1.76	1.76	1.74	1.74	6,477,000
Transpacific Broadcast	1.36	1.36	1.36	1.36	35,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1060	1075	1055	1070	346,140
Ivantage Corp.	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	50,000
Philweb Corp.	0.013	0.013	0.012	0.012	51,000,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	18.25	18.25	18	18	37,500
Manila Electric Co. B	28.5	28.5	26.5	26.5	637,700
Petron Corp.	3.1	3.1	3	3.05	1,325,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3	3	3	3	10,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp	1.64	1.64	1.64	1.647	122,000
Union Cement Corp.	1.58	1.62	1.58	1.62	522,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp	3.1	3.1	3	3	529,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	28	29	28	29	7,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	19.25	19.25	19	19	104,000
RFM Corp	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58	110,000
San Miguel Corp. A	57	58	57	57.5	107,300
San Miguel Corp. B	71.5	72	71.5	72	252,900
Universal Robina Corp.	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	22,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	450,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	10,000
Ayala Corp	6.4	6.5	6.2	6.3	3,287,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	2.85	2.85	2.85	2.85	80,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1	1	1	1	90,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.73	0.73	0.73	0.73	40,000
Benpres Holdings Corp	0.53	0.53	0.51	0.51	2,150,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	100,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	300,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1	1	1	1	160,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	23	23	22	22.25	307,400
Ionics Inc.	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	10,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.16	1.16	1.12	1.12	2,625,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	4,160,000
Philcomsat Holdings Corp.	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	30,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	14.75	14.75	14.75	14.75	18,500
Vivant Corp.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	10,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	50,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.24	0.25	0.24	0.25	260,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Cen Azucar De Tarlac	5.6	5.6	5.6	5.6	2,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	1.28	1.28	1.2	1.22	60,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.5	0.5	0.48	0.48	260,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	22.5	22.5	22	22	69,700
DMCI Holdings Inc.- Pref.	775	775	775	775	1,200
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	6	6	6	6	3,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	9,489,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.15	0.15	124,900,000
C & P Homes Inc	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	710,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	10,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	8,420,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.08	1.08	1.06	1.06	6,541,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.185	50,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	500,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	200,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	1.78	1.78	1.78	1.78	20,000
SM Development Corp.	1.14	1.14	1.12	1.12	1,557,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc	6	6	6	6	8,910,000
MINING					
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	30,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0028	0.0028	0.0028	0.0028	1,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0028	0.0028	0.0028	0.0028	2,000,000
Sinophil Corp	0.03	0.03	0.028	0.028	900,000

DISCLOSURES

ARIES Prime Resources Inc.'s new external editor is C.L. Manabat & Company.

* * *

BANKARD Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 27, 2:30 p.m. at St. La Salle Hall, 5/F of Tower 2 RCBC Plaza, Makati City. Stockholders of record as of April 26 will be entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting. Also, the company announced the resignation of Bienvenido Tantoco Sr. as director.

* * *

EAST Asia Power Resources Corp. denied having any information that could explain the rise in its share price from P0.06 to P0.09.

* * *

PHILIPPINE Savings Bank will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 30, 4 p.m. at the 19/F of PSBank Center, Makati City.

* * *

REPUBLIC Glass Holdings Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 30, 3 p.m. at the 2/F of Republic Glass Building, Legaspi Village, Makati City.

* * *

BALABAC Resources and Holdings Company Inc. denied having any information that could explain the 50-percent increase in its share price that rose from P0.33 to P0.49 each.

* * *

JOSUE Camba Jr., director of **Export and Industry Bank** bought 1million shares of the bank last April 5.

Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research

CURRENCIES

April 12, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.826309701	1	56.3460
Japan	Yen	0.007766	0.009398	0.5295
United Kingdom	Pound	1.515287	1.8338	103.3273
Hongkong	Dollar	0.106006	0.128289	7.2286
Switzerland	Franc	0.645	0.780579	43.9825
Canada	Dollar	0.621847	0.752559	42.4037
Singapore	Dollar	0.49276	0.596338	33.6013
Australia	Dollar	0.628994	0.761209	42.8911
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.191861	2.65259	149.4628
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.220361	0.266681	15.0264
Brunei	Dollar	0.491296	0.594566	33.5014
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000097	0.000117	0.0066
Thailand	Baht	0.021133	0.025575	1.4410
UAE	Dirham	0.224981	0.272272	15.3414
Euro	Euro	1	1.2102	68.1899
Argentina	Peso	0.294847	0.356824	20.1056
Brazil	REAL	0.287412	0.347826	19.5986
Denmark	Kroner	0.134311	0.162543	9.1586
India	Rupee	0.018996	0.022989	1.2953
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.217479	0.263193	14.8299
Mexico	New Peso	0.073614	0.089088	5.0198
New Zealand	Dollar	0.543696	0.657981	37.0746
Norway	Kroner	0.119219	0.144279	8.1295
Pakistan	Rupee	0.014459	0.017498	0.9859
South Africa	Rand	0.130901	0.158416	8.9261
Korea	Won	0.000722	0.000874	0.0492
Sweden	Kroner	0.109089	0.13202	7.4388
Syria	Pound	0.018704	0.022635	1.2754
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025231	0.030534	1.7205
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000431	0.000522	0.0294

Shares close lower

From page B1

stocks analyst Jose Vistan.

Vistan said heightened global security concerns after a spate of kidnappings in Iraq dashed foreign investor sentiment.

The main index dropped 6.23 points or 0.41 percent to 1,510.58. The market is up 4.73 percent so far this year.

"I think there's room for further selling with the psychological support at 1,490," Vistan said.

Reuters

Testing an 'anting anting' /C3

LIFESTYLE

For feedback, text us at (0918) 382-4061 or (0916) 200-1160 or e-mail us at pr_lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

DR. Rica Silva-Mallari, head of the Dermatology Center Hair Unit of St. Luke's Medical Center, specializes in trichology, the study of hair and its diseases.

THE NEW Pantene Hair Fall Control Shampoo claims to prevent loss by as much as 50 percent in just two months by strengthening hair at its roots.

Rescuing the 'dead'

Although hair is actually dead protein cells, its loss is certainly to be lamented

By Anne A. Jambora

A HEALTHY mop may suggest a life of vigor and excitement, and enhances a person's looks. Ironically, a person's crowning glory, the human hair, is actually made up of dead protein cells.

Still, hair can be the root of vanity for many people. But just as it can make someone drop-dead gorgeous, it is also capable of making him or her want to simply drop dead. In Asia alone, about 46 percent of women suffer from excessive falling hair that, if left unchecked, can lead to baldness.

There are many reasons for diffused hair loss, says Dr. Rica Silva-Mallari, head of the Dermatology Center Hair Unit of St. Luke's Medical Center, the country's first hospital-based hair clinic. Dr. Silva-Mallari specializes in trichology, the study of hair and its diseases. She says young men and women who are only in their 20s and 30s are already seeking medical help for their frightfully thinning mane.

"The biggest mistake Filipinos make is to self-medicate. The root problem may not be properly addressed, and the series of trial and error with hair products may lead to further damage. Always seek professional help—it will save you money and may arrest the ailment if diagnosed early," Silva-Mallari says.

'Molting'

The hair unit's young clientele, however, is not an ominous sign of things to come and should not be cause for alarm. Silva-Mallari explains this may be because, since hair study is relatively new in the Philippines, young people have just started to seek professional help for diffused hair fall problem. On the other hand, older people, especially those in their 60s, may no longer see the need to have their problem seen to.

The expert also stresses that just because the bathroom's drain gets clogged after a person washes his/her hair doesn't mean one is getting bald. The human head normally sheds up to 100 strands a day. Since these are usually replaced by new ones, a clogged drain could simply mean the bathroom needs a thorough scrub.

But if the hair loss is excessive, a strand saved is a strand saved. With 100,000-150,000 strands on a normal head, excessive shedding will create a hideous shiny patch on the head in no time, especially since the hair grows at a snail's pace of one centimeter per month.

But at least 90 percent of them are growing at any one time. When part of the root dies, the hair may fall off or be pushed out by the next growing hair. The problem begins when the hair is not replenished as quickly as they break off. Even more worrisome is if they are not replaced at all.

Either way, what the fragile hair needs is a booster. After all, anything that is not a living tissue cannot repair itself on its own, and needs all the help it can get.

Prevention

This problem has many causes, says Silva-Mallari. The most obvious is genetic—if other family members suffer from diffused hair loss, it won't be surprising if another one develops the problem.

Daily washing, brushing, styling, sun exposure, etc. also cause the hair to weaken, break and fall out. And regular visits to the hair salon for perming, coloring, rebonding, relaxing, etc., expose the hair to many harmful chemicals.

Illness and medication can contribute to the problem. "Stress can aggravate but it is not the primary cause," Silva-Mallari adds, although crash diets do cause excessive hair loss because of nutritional imbalance.

The new Pantene Hair Fall Control Shampoo claims to prevent loss by as much as 50 percent in just two months by strengthening hair at its roots. The product contains Pro-Vitamin B5, which does help strengthen the hair, Silva-Mallari says. She is quick to point out, however, that the product should not be mistaken for a hair-thickening agent.

"Damage to the hair on a day-to-day basis is unavoidable as nearly everyone's daily hair-care regimen damages its cuticle one way or the other, so we have dry hair, split ends, tangles, etc. *'Pag natanggal na 'yung* cuticle, the hair is susceptible to damage. But we can help strengthen the hair and avoid excessive hair fall," she says.

Pantene's Hair Fall Control Shampoo works on newly born hair, too. Religious application provides renewed hair protection. The shampoo is said to give a protective coat on the hair that smoothens its rough parts and reduces static and friction. Hair then becomes manageable and less prone to breakage.

Unlike eyebrow hair that lasts for a mere five months, the hair on the head normally stays for up to five long years before it naturally "dies" and falls out. But lifestyle, environment, nutrition, hair care regimen and more may change all that.

An ounce of prevention is, indeed, still worth a pound of cure.

E-mail the author at ajambora@inquirer.com.ph

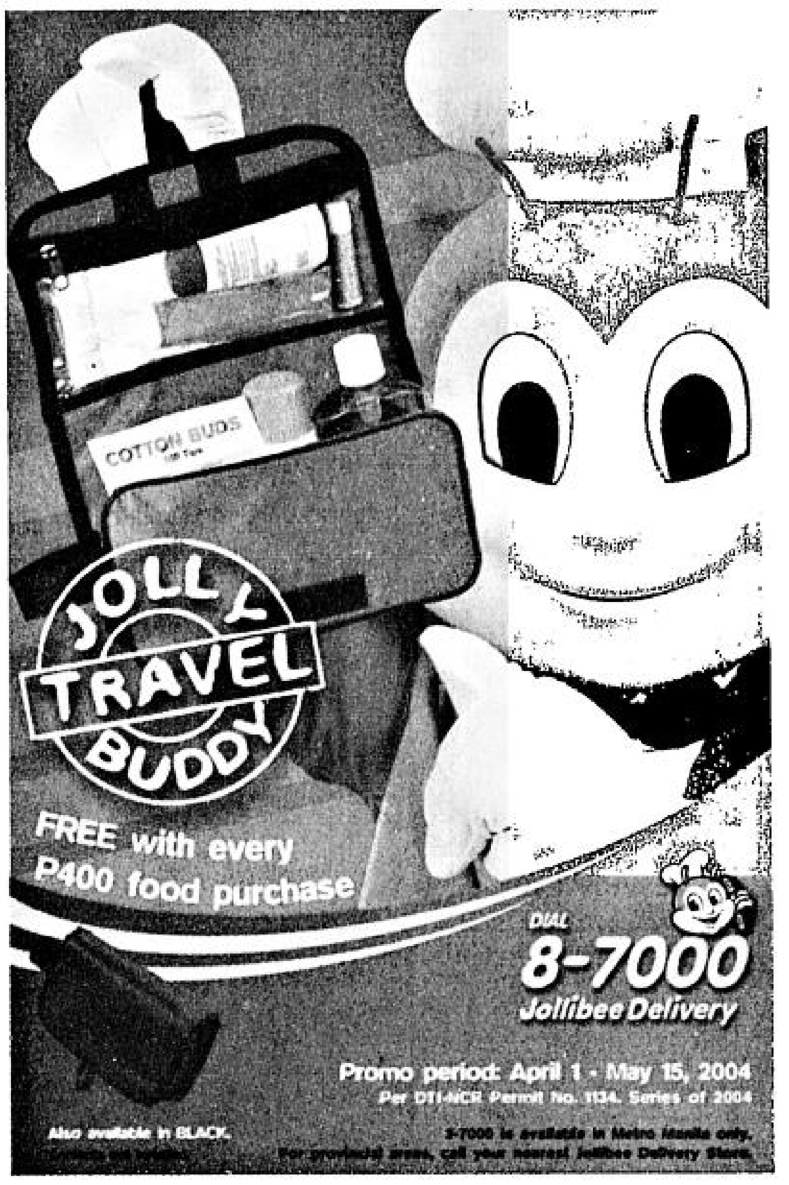
onstage 2nyt

Cowboy Grill

LAS PIÑAS ☎ 801.7644 — CROOSTOWN KOOLJACKS — OPEN FROM 6PM TO 5AM NO ENTRANCE FEE
MABINI ☎ 525.1474 — MEN OPPOSE CHICULLED/E-MAGE — OPEN FROM 6PM TO 6AM NO ENTRANCE FEE
MALATE ☎ 521.8143 — EMMANUELLE ZEST — OPEN FROM 6PM TO 5AM NO ENTRANCE FEE
NOVALICHES ☎ 936.9757 — MUSIC CIRCUIT CRO MAGNON — OPEN FROM 6PM TO 5AM NO ENTRANCE FEE
BIÑAN ☎ (049)511.7268 — FAT 16 HEADWORKZ — OPEN FROM 6PM TO 5AM NO ENTRANCE FEE

TIA MARIA'S
REMEDIOS ☎ 522.0429 — TIA MARIA'S RHYTHM ACE RIGHT SPELLING — NO ENTRANCE FEE

APRIL 13 TUESDAY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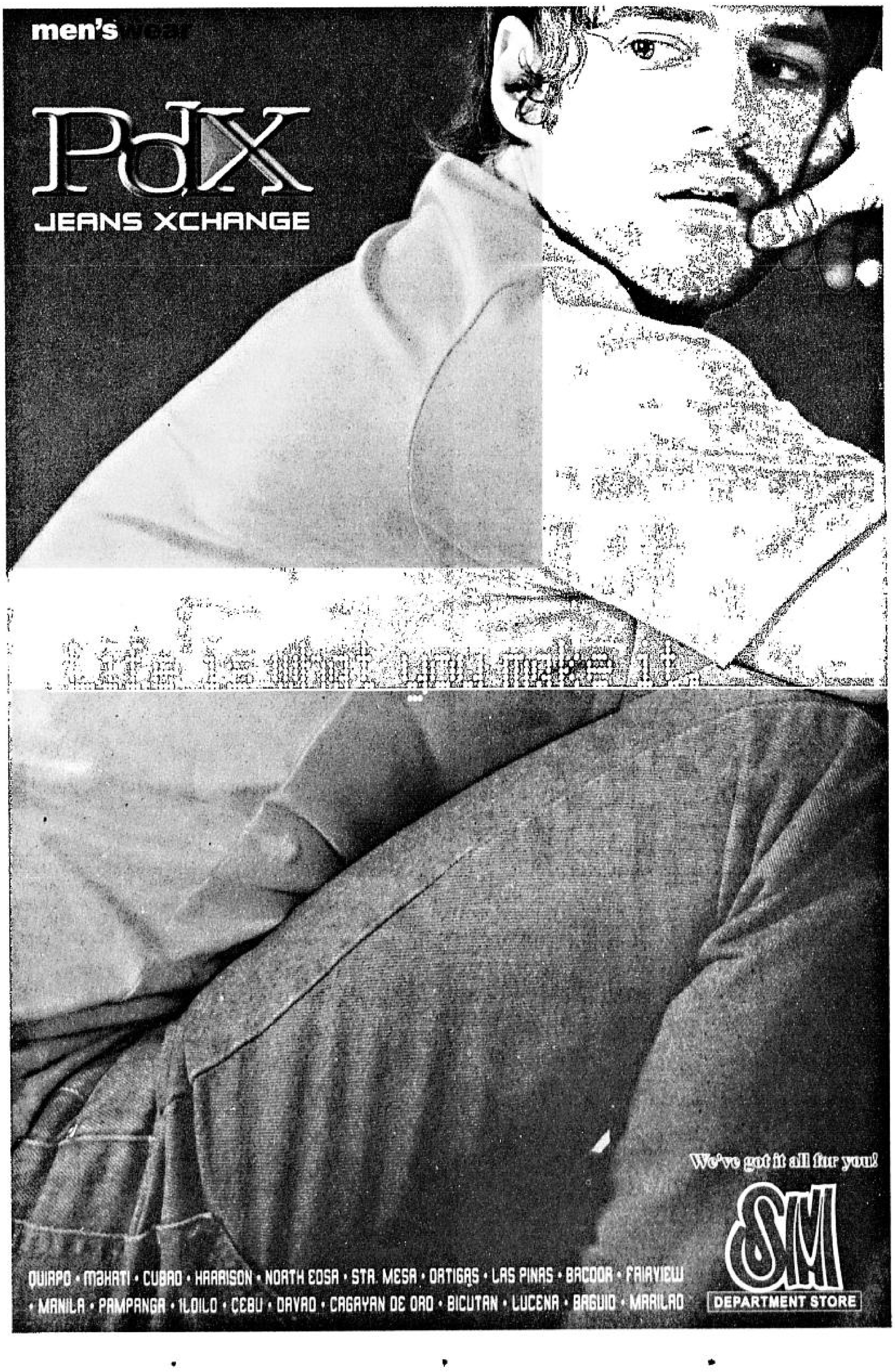
men's wear
PdX
JEANS XCHANGE
We've got it all for you!
QUIAPO • MAKATI • CUBAO • HARRISON • NORTH EDSA • STA. MESA • ORTIGAS • LAS PINAS • BACOOR • FAIRVIEW • MANILA • PAMPANGA • ILOILO • CEBU • DAVAO • CAGAYAN DE ORO • BICUTAN • LUCENA • BAGUIO • MARILAO
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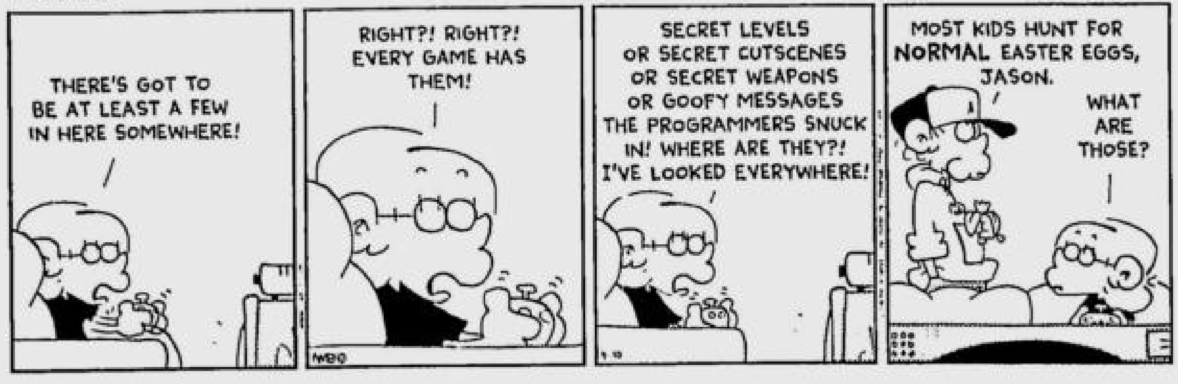
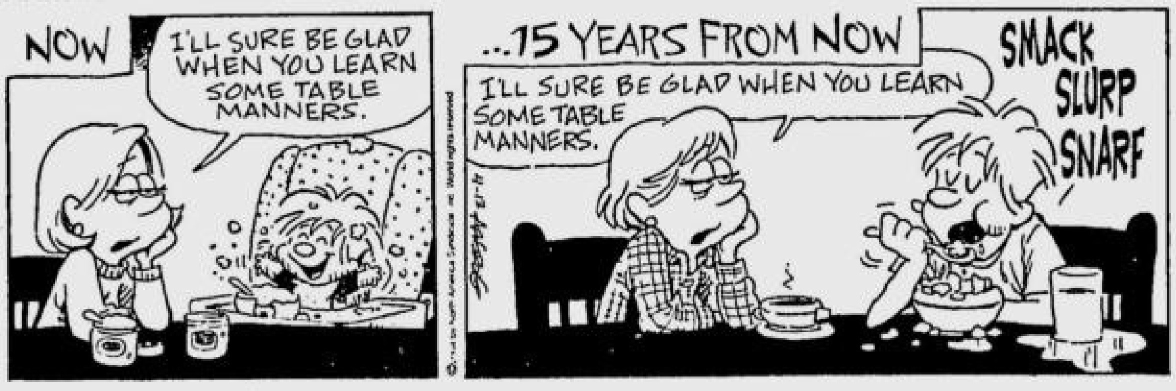
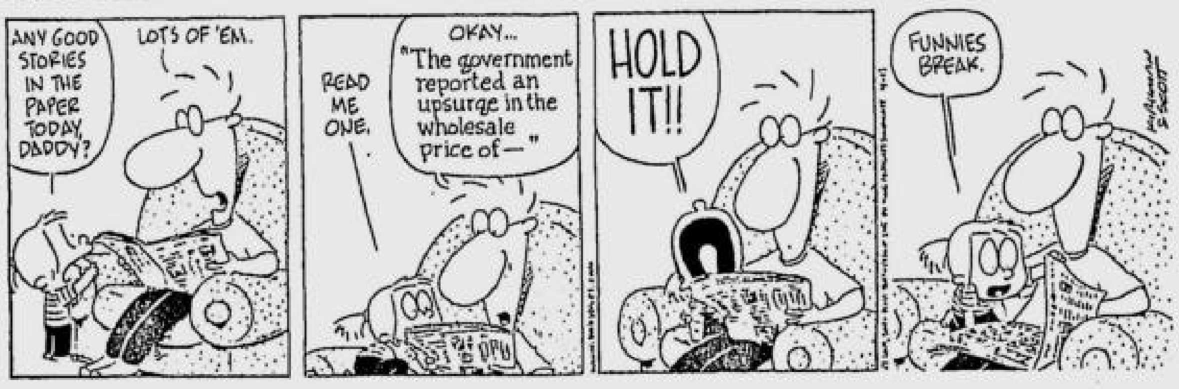

THERE'S GOT TO BE AT LEAST A FEW IN HERE SOMEWHERE!
RIGHT?! RIGHT?! EVERY GAME HAS THEM!
SECRET LEVELS OR SECRET CUTSCENES OR SECRET WEAPONS OR GOOFY MESSAGES THE PROGRAMMERS SNUCK IN! WHERE ARE THEY?! I'VE LOOKED EVERYWHERE!
MOST KIDS HUNT FOR NORMAL EASTER EGGS, JASON.
WHAT ARE THOSE?

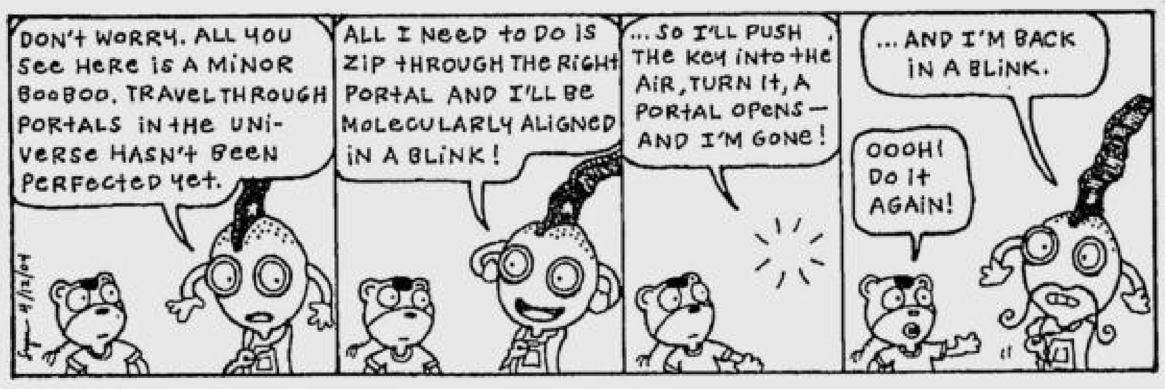
MARVIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG


NOW
I'LL SURE BE GLAD WHEN YOU LEARN SOME TABLE MANNERS.
...15 YEARS FROM NOW
I'LL SURE BE GLAD WHEN YOU LEARN SOME TABLE MANNERS.
SMACK SLURP SNARF

BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


ANY GOOD STORIES IN THE PAPER TODAY, DADDY?
LOTS OF 'EM.
READ ME ONE.
OKAY... "The government reported an upsurge in the wholesale price of—"
HOLD IT!!
FUNNIES BREAK.

ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


DON'T WORRY. ALL YOU SEE HERE IS A MINOR BOOBOO. TRAVEL THROUGH PORTALS IN THE UNIVERSE HASN'T BEEN PERFECTED YET.
ALL I NEED TO DO IS ZIP THROUGH THE RIGHT PORTAL AND I'LL BE MOLECULARLY ALIGNED IN A BLINK!
...SO I'LL PUSH THE KEY INTO THE AIR, TURN IT, A PORTAL OPENS— AND I'M GONE!
...AND I'M BACK IN A BLINK.
OOOH! DO IT AGAIN!

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You are bold and inventive. You have an adventurous mind. You sometimes shock others with your actions and philosophies. However, many admire your pioneering stance. You are strong-willed and unconventional. People view you as unusual. Prepare for major changes in your life (for the better) this year. **Birthdate of:** Thomas Jefferson, 3rd US president; Samuel Beckett, writer; Rick Schroeder, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You want to find a way to support a friend today. Perhaps you want to throw your energy into a group activity. Either way, you want to help, and you've got the drive to do it.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You love beautiful things—silver, gold, wood, pewter—the real deal. Today, you're tempted to buy something luxurious. If you can afford it, go right ahead!

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You're ready to put your actions to the test today. You want to demonstrate what you believe in. You will likely champion a pet cause—something dear to your heart.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You find it easy to be selfless and self-sacrificing today. You want to put the needs of others before your own. Be helpful, but don't be a martyr.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Set your armies marching today! You easily persuade friends and like-minded individuals to join you in some venture. Your enthusiasm inspires everyone around you.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): If you have any influence at all, you will want to improve working conditions where you are. You see the need for reform, and you're prepared to talk to management about this. This is a good idea.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Today you see that actions speak louder than words. Plans for vacations and creative activities look doable! You're going to go for the brass ring and see what you can pull off.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You don't mind at all helping a family member today. You find it easy to be patient, caring and supportive. (It's a joy to labor for those you love.)

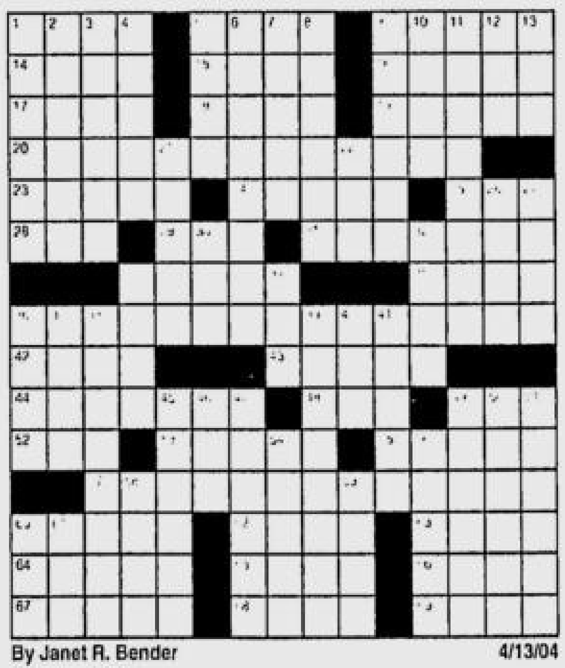
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Differences with others make you understand yourself better. (What bothers you in someone else is the very thing that bothers you in yourself.)

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You can get a lot done at work today, because you aren't keeping score. You just want to get the job done and move on. Great!

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Your creative vibes are fabulous today! This same sensitivity makes you gentle and kind with children right now. They sense that you care.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You have a strong desire to improve conditions at home or within your family today. You simply want to make things better for everyone—including you.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Janet R. Bender
Somerset, PA
4/13/04

ACROSS
1 Most desirable
5 Rugged cliff
9 Facets
14 Pastel shade
15 Residence
16 BYU location
17 Blockhead
18 Infamous Idi
19 Spread like wildfire
20 Military threat
23 Make amends
24 Synthetic fiber
25 Have a hero
28 Cry like a kitten
29 Pair
31 Devour greedily
33 Petty quarrels
35 Jed of "The Chris Isaak Show"
36 Impending danger
42 Dynamic intro?
43 City in Tuscany
44 Foodstuff
48 Ship deserter
49 __ Moines, IA
52 "Do Ya" grp.
53 Set of values
55 Ultraviolet filter
57 Lowly Marine Corps rank
60 Has on
62 Exist
63 Label
64 Putter Palmer
65 U.S. second banana
66 Orwell's alma mater
67 Favorable responses
68 Makes a goof
69 Ominous

DOWN
1 Aromatic resin
2 Treat as identical
3 Colorful arc
4 Confiscated
5 Singe
6 Ustinov film, "__ and Juliet"
7 Friendship
8 Like a little lamb?
9 Bound
10 Present Persia
11 Amateurish verse
12 Celebration night
13 Instant lawn
21 Made over
22 Actor Chaney
26 "A Death in the Family" author
27 Roman Polanski film
30 ETs' craft
32 Puget Sound whale
33 Quick pace
34 '60s campus org.
36 Rescue
37 __ Am Rhein, Germany
38 Old World buntings
39 Protection from above
40 __ culpa
41 In a dominant position
45 Elements in telescopes
46 & so on & so forth
47 Put away for later
49 Conductor Antal
50 Captivate
51 Goddess of the moon
54 More aloof
56 Divided into sectors
58 1997 Indy winner Luyendyk
59 Workout figs.
60 Means
61 Afore

Monday's Puzzle Solved

G	E	L	S	■	T	A	N	S	■	S	T	E	A	L
A	L	I	T	■	O	V	A	L	■	T	E	R	R	A
T	H	E	I	N	V	I	S	I	B	L	E	M	A	N
S	I	N	G	E	■	D	A	D	A	■	N	A	N	A
■	■	■	M	A	S	■	■	E	L	S	A	■	■	■
D	I	S	A	P	P	E	A	R	I	N	G	A	C	T
E	D	T	■	S	A	K	S	■	■	L	E	M	U	R
L	I	O	N	■	M	E	T	R	O	■	R	U	B	E
H	O	M	E	R	■	■	F	A	R	E	■	S	A	N
I	M	A	G	I	N	A	R	Y	F	R	I	E	N	D
■	■	■	A	G	A	S	■	■	[illegible]	E	N	■	■	■
E	M	[illegible]	I	■	S	P	A	[illegible]	■	S	L	A	[illegible]	[illegible]
V	A	N	I	S	H	I	N	G	P	O	I	N	T	S
A	L	C	O	A	■	R	O	T	E	■	N	Y	E	T
S	L	A	N	T	■	E	A	S	T	■	E	A	T	S

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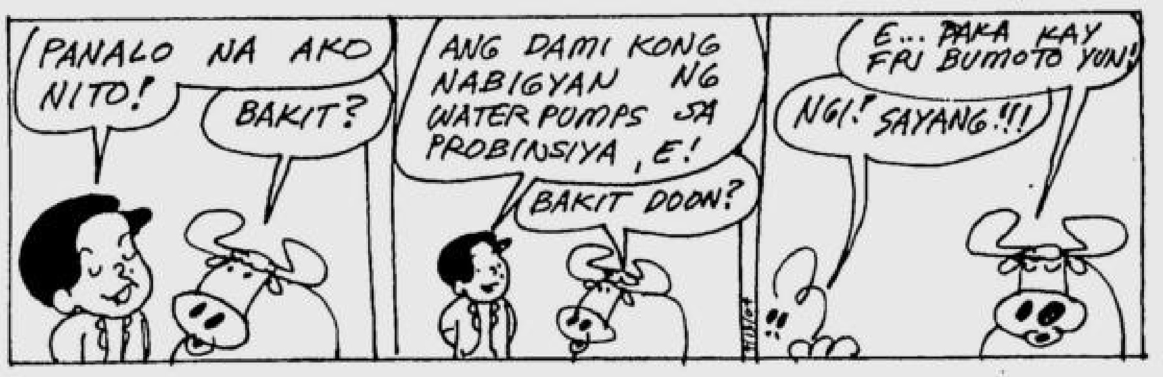
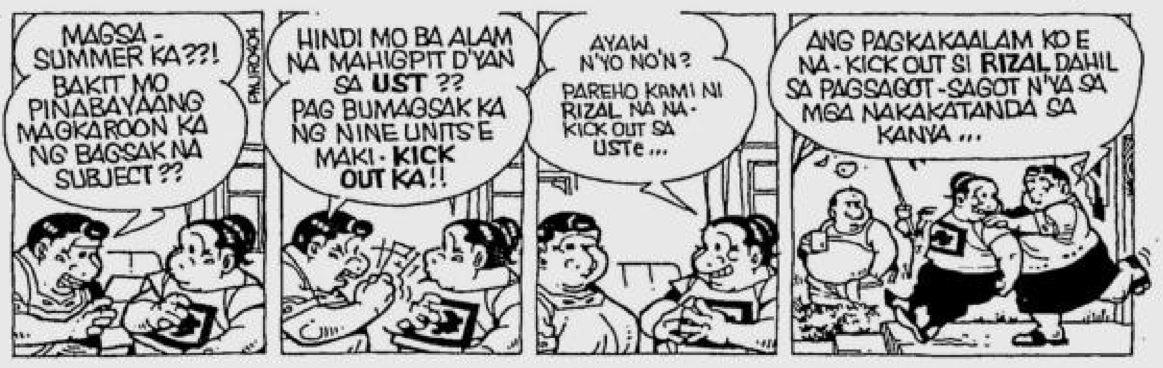
4/12/04

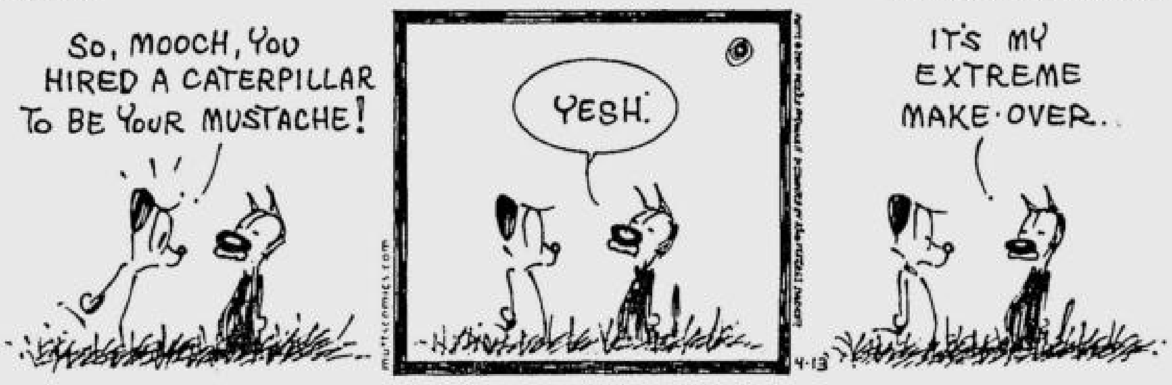
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


PANALO NA AKO NITO!
BAKIT?
ANG DAMI KONG NABIGYAN NG WATER PUMPS SA PROBINSIYA, E!
BAKIT DOON?
E... PAKA KAY FPJ BUMOTO YUN!
NGI! SAYANG!!!

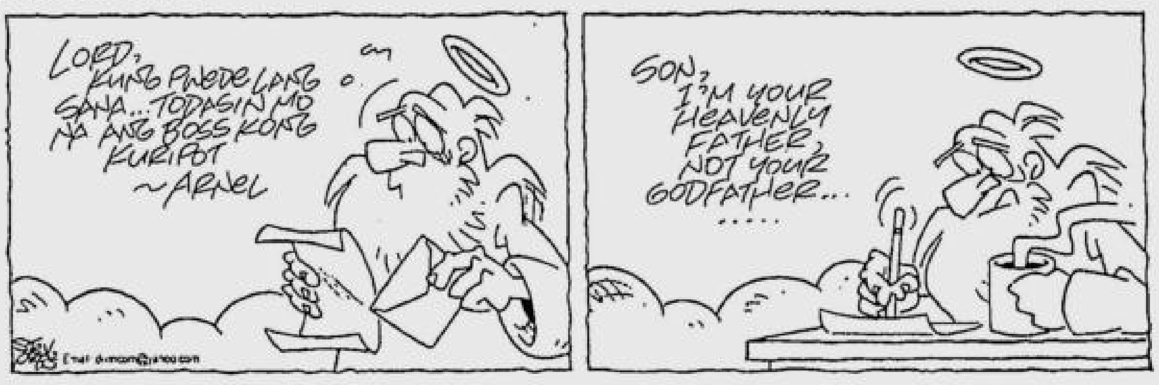
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


MAGSA-SUMMER KA??! BAKIT MO PINABAYAANG MAGKAROON KA NG BAGSAK NA SUBJECT??
HINDI MO BA ALAM NA MAHIGPIT D'YAN SA UST ?? PAG BUMAGSAK KA NG NINE UNITS E MAKI-KICK OUT KA!!
AYAW N'YO NO'N? PAREHO KAMI NI RIZAL NA NA-KICK OUT SA USTe...
ANG PAGKAKAALAM KO E NA-KICK OUT SI RIZAL DAHIL SA PAGSAGOT-SAGOT N'YA SA MGA NAKAKATANDA SA KANYA...

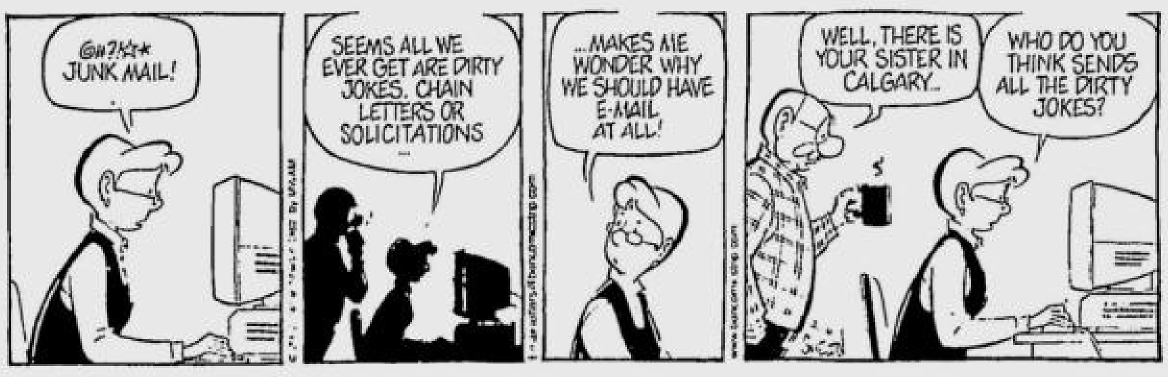
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


SO, MOOCH, YOU HIRED A CATERPILLAR TO BE YOUR MUSTACHE!
YESH.
IT'S MY EXTREME MAKE-OVER..
4-13

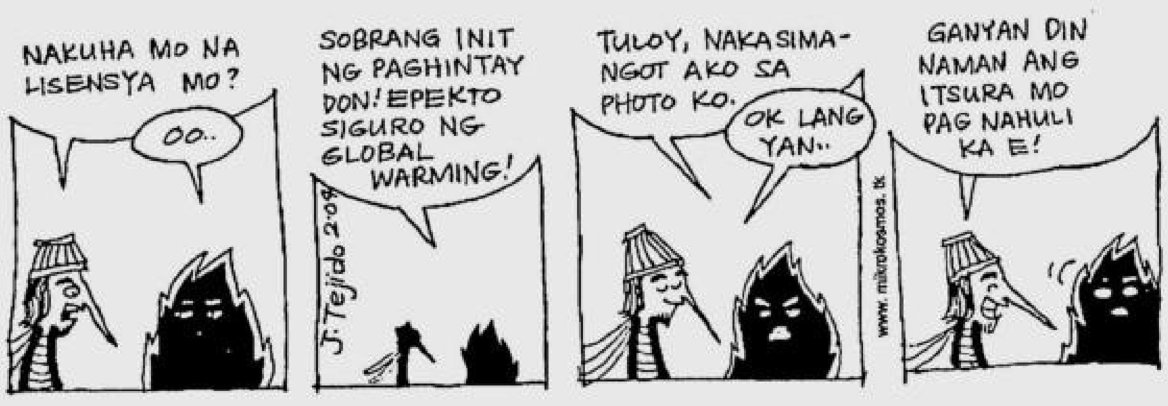
DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS


LORD, KUNG PWEDE LANG SANA... TODASIN MO NA ANG BOSS KONG KURIPOT ~ARNEL
SON, I'M YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER, NOT YOUR GODFATHER...

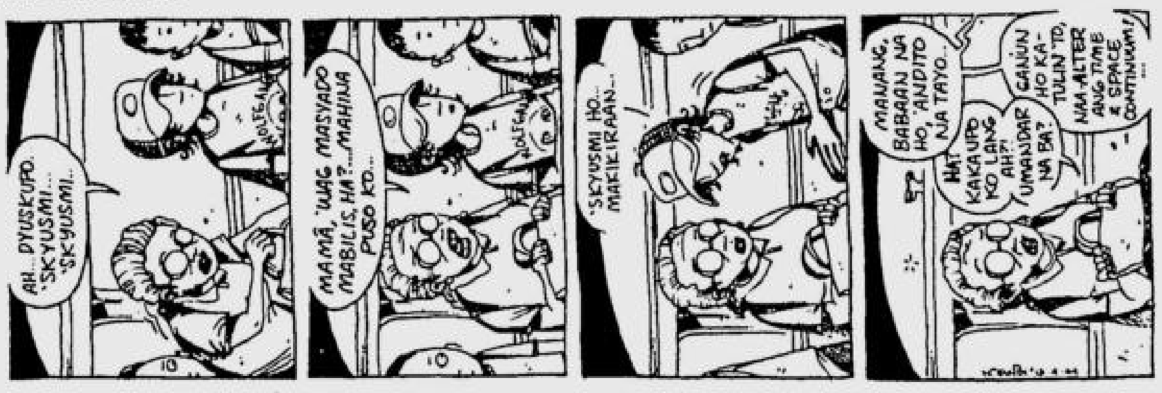
BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


G#?%* JUNK MAIL!
SEEMS ALL WE EVER GET ARE DIRTY JOKES. CHAIN LETTERS OR SOLICITATIONS
...MAKES ME WONDER WHY WE SHOULD HAVE E-MAIL AT ALL!
WELL, THERE IS YOUR SISTER IN CALGARY...
WHO DO YOU THINK SENDS ALL THE DIRTY JOKES?

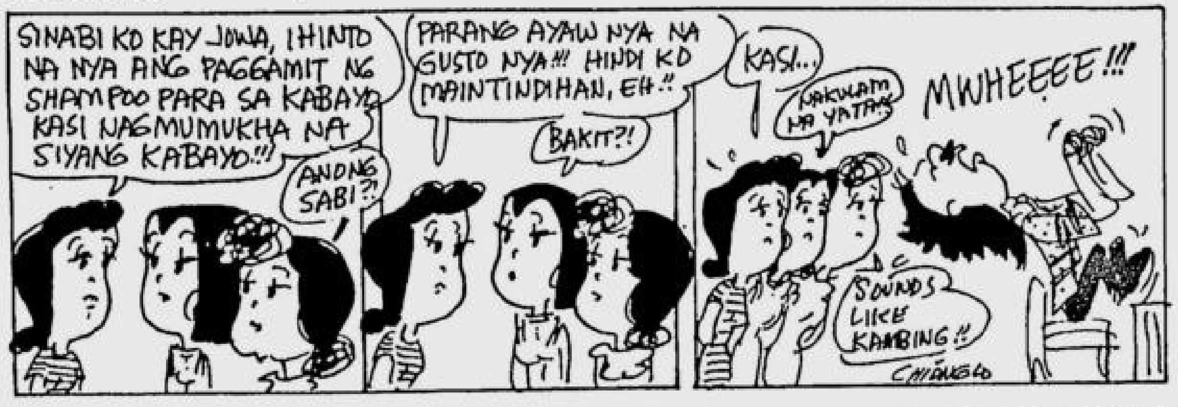
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


NAKUHA MO NA LISENSYA MO?
OO..
SOBRANG INIT NG PAGHINTAY DON! EPEKTO SIGURO NG GLOBAL WARMING!
TULOY, NAKASIMANGOT AKO SA PHOTO KO.
OK LANG YAN..
GANYAN DIN NAMAN ANG ITSURA MO PAG NAHULI KA E!
J. Tejido 2·04
www.mikrokosmos.tk

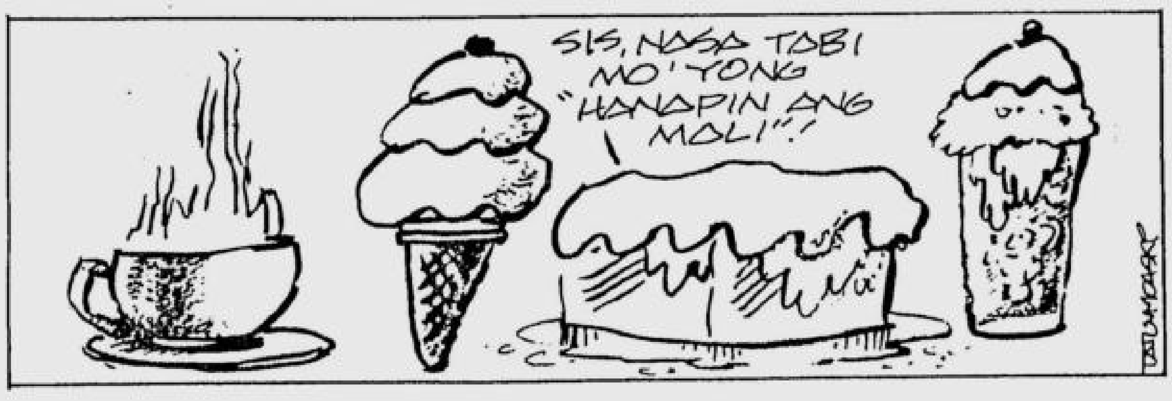
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


AH...DYUSKUPO. 'SKYUSMI... 'SKYUSMI...
MAMA, 'WAG MASYADO MABILIS, HA?...MAHINA PUSO KO...
'SKYUSMI HO... MAKIKIRAAN...
MANANG, BABAAN NA HO, 'ANDITO NA TAYO...
HA! KAKAUPO KO LANG AH?! UMANDAR NA BA?
GANUN HO KA-TULIN 'TO, NAG-ALTER ANG TIME & SPACE CONTINUUM!

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


SINABI KO KAY JOWA, IHINTO NA NYA ANG PAGGAMIT NG SHAMPOO PARA SA KABAYO KASI NAGMUMUKHA NA SIYANG KABAYO!!!
ANONG SABI?!
PARANG AYAW NYA NA GUSTO NYA!!! HINDI KO MAINTINDIHAN, EH!!
BAKIT?!
KASI...
NAKUHAM NA YATA!
MWHEEEE!!!
SOUNDS LIKE KAMBING!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


SIS, NASA TABI MO 'YONG "HANAPIN ANG MALI"!

Putting my own 'anting-anting' to a test

Part 1

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licauco

LAST week, I said I would not believe in the so-called powers of *anting-anting* (amulet or talisman) to protect the wearer from bullets or sharp knives until I've seen it with my very eyes.

Well, something incredible happened in the afternoon of March 30, in a fishing village in Lumang Lipa, Batangas, which, somehow upset my usually logical and analytical mind. I not only witnessed several men being hacked forcefully with a sharp, double-bladed jungle bolo without being wounded, but I myself was hacked six times.

Yes, what I had been wishing to experience or at least witness for many years now finally became a reality.

It happened quite by accident (although I don't believe in coincidences). Bartolome Villanueva Jr., an architect who took my seminars several years ago, was in my office two weeks before to discuss the construction of the garage and fence in my La Marea property in San Pedro, Laguna.

He saw a paper on my desk with *oracion*, which my secretary copied from a very tiny booklet lent to me by Lisa Montero of Iloilo City. JR said he had an *oracion* and *anting-anting* collection, but didn't know how to use them.

'Anting-anting' 'authority'

I tried to reach Emil Narido of Haring Bakal but failed. I then called up Ruben Salangsang of Montalban, whom I knew was a member of the same organization of amulet believers and users. He said he could explain them to JR, but "there is somebody better than me who can give JR the 'blessing' necessary to activate these amulets."

He arranged for us to meet *Utol* Jesus Verallo Jr., head of the Haring Bakal group in Lumang Lipa, Batangas. ("*utol*" is Tagalog for "brother" and all male members of the organization are addressed that way).

Utol Jess lives on the side of a hill in a poor fishing village in Lumang Lipa facing the shore. It was past noon when we reached the place. With me were JR Villanueva, his worker Boyet del Rosario, whose father was also into *anting anting*; Romy Macapagal, a businessman, researcher and martial arts teacher; and Ruben Salangsang.

Utol Jess' wife and daughter prepared lunch consisting of boiled and grilled fresh fish, *pancit* and rice.

Waiting for the 'basbas'

After lunch, Utol Jess brought out of his room a 2½ ft long double-bladed jungle bolo and placed it at the window. Apparently, it was used for the "*basbas*" or blessing. Utol Jess asked who among us would be blessed. We all pointed to JR, and JR pointed to his worker Boyet del Rosario. Utol Jess said he could make the blessing simultaneously that afternoon.

A bench was brought in and JR was asked to sit on it facing the wall. Utol Jess asked, "Anybody else?" Boyet came forward and sat next to JR. It was then I said, "I will have myself blessed, too!" not knowing what I was getting into. When Romy Macapagal saw me sit on the bench, he, too, said, "*Ako na rin nga.*" We heard the soft laughter of several Haring *Bakal* members.

Romy knew exactly what would take place and how the blessing or *basbas* would be done. But both JR and myself did not know the exact process. I thought he would just tap our shoulders lightly with the bolo, like what the king or queen of England does when making a person a knight.

30-minute ritual

We were asked to sit touching each other's shoulders and to look up, while Utol Jess stood behind us and performed the ceremony or ritual which we did not see. We only felt him blowing air on our heads. The process took about 30 minutes to complete. I was becoming restless.

Then, he asked three of those seated on the bench with me to stand up, except me. Utol Jess said I was to be the first to be blessed. Well, I said to myself, "That's strange. I was the last to want this thing and I became the first to have it. Cool!"

Utol Jess asked me to continue looking up and to put my two hands behind my back, as if they were tied. Then he positioned himself to my right, with bolo in hand. He swung the bolo upward and with some force struck my right thigh with the blade. It hurt a little but the blade merely bounced off my skin. Then he struck for the second time, more strongly. The same thing happened. I felt he struck me again the third time. This time with even greater force than before. The third strike hurt the most.

Then he asked me to stand up facing the door, keeping my hands firmly at my back. He again positioned himself to my right, raised the bolo and hit me on my stomach three successive times, each blow harder than the one before it. The third one was the strongest and I felt the force of the blows each time the blade struck my stomach. It hurt but not to an unbearable degree. The blade simply bounced off my body.

How did I feel throughout the whole incredible process? I have to describe this as accurately as I can next week. Watch for it.

Listen to my dzMM radio program every Sunday, 7-8:30 p.m.

Play your game in the mall

SM Supermalls launched its Summer Sports promo at the SM Megamall.

Some of the country's top athletes, sports officials and sports shop executives attended the launch.

Among those who were present were top Philippine Basketball Association (PBA) players Alvin Patrimonio and Paul Artadi of Purefoods, Marlou Aquino and Dennis Espinosa of Sta. Lucia, the Alaska team led by EJ Feihl, Harvey Carey and Jimmy Alapag of Talk 'N Text, Enrico Villanueva and Mike Pinissi of Red Bull, and Rod Duat and Poch Juinio of Coca-Cola.

Also there were PBA Commissioner Noli Eala and chair Buddy Encarnado, Alaska team manager Joaqui Trillo, Toby's president Bobby Claudio, Sports Central's Frederick Go, Accel's Willy Ortiz, Puzzle Dazzle's Gonzales Tan, and celebrity Mandy Ochoa. The National Cheering Squad did a high-energy opening number.

PBA commissioner Noli Eala, Talk 'N Text's Jimmy Alapag and PBA chair Buddy Encarnado

Co-sponsors of the month-long promo ongoing in all SM Supermalls until April 30, are VC and Globe Telecommunications.

In the Hand and Shoe Print Gallery, people can compare hand and foot sizes with those of PBA's Alvin Patrimonio, Mark Caguioa, Jimmy Alapag, Mike Cortez and EJ Feihl.

PBA fans can see how the 2004 rookies looked as kids at the PBA Photo Gallery. They can shoot an oversized ball and earn big points at the Giant Inflatable Basketball Hoop or have a snapshot beside an image of Jimmy Alapag. They can also check out autographed balls at the Molten Basketball Museum.

Shoppers can vote for their PBA Superstars Best Five for every receipt worth P100 from any store at the SM Supermalls at the PBA Interactive, which will go on a mall tour: April 12-18, SM Supercenter Sucat; April 12-23, SM City Manila; April 19-25, SM Southmall; April 28-May 1, SM City Pampanga; April 24-29, SM City Sta. Mesa; and May 3-9, at SM City Bacoor.

Other summer sports activities are also organized by SM malls like badminton tournaments, table tennis clinics, and football and soccer events.

Martial arts enthusiasts will be treated to karate exhibitions by the Association for the Advancement of Karate and a taekwondo competition. Other activities are sports climbing for extreme sports enthusiasts, fencing tournaments, dart clinics and games.

Parents can enroll their kids in clinics at the SM Bowling Center, and the SM Ice Skating Rink.

Fireflies take wings again

THE 6TH Tour of the Fireflies will be held April 18.

Participants are reminded to bring water and other fluids for hydration, food/energy boosters, sunblock. They should also take note of ride length, pace, rest stops.

Marshals, support and gear vehicles, and medical assistance will be strategically positioned along the tour route.

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Only Equitable Travel Card lets you use the points you earn to travel any way you want– whether by land, sea or air; with or without airfare; with or without hotel accommodations. Take your pick. Or choose from close to a hundred reward items like handsome luggage and the latest digital cameras representing a veritable wish list for seasoned travelers.

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See leaflets for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0139, Series of 2004.

The versatile coco oil

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

AFTER YEARS of getting a bad press, coconut oil, a saturated fat, is finally starting to clear its name.

Coconut oil has been around for centuries. Ancient Ayurvedic (Indian) literature says it was used for medical and cosmetic purposes.

Half of the world's population uses coconut oil. Studies show that people in tropical countries using coconut oil have generally good health and register less incidence of heart disease, cancer, digestive and prostate problems.

A smear campaign against coconut oil that favored soy bean oil made it suspect. But now coconut oil is no longer considered a "dietary poison." The oil contains a medium-chain fat called monolaurin that is considered unique and remarkable. The fat (coco oil is called the low-fat oil because it promotes weight loss) is found only in mother's milk.

Coconut oil, commercially available as "Monolaurin Lauricidin," is currently undergoing clinical trials as a treatment for genital herpes, hepatitis C and infections with the human immunodeficiency virus that causes the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Clinical results so far have been very promising.

Dr. Bruce Fife, nutritionist and naturopathic physician, in his book "The Healing Miracles of Coconut Oil," explains why we should welcome the return of coconut oil.

Ancient food

The coconut and all its by-products—oil, milk, jam—have been used by millions for thousands of years in Asia, the Pacific Islands, Africa and Central America. Ancient humans who depended on coconut for sustenance did not suffer from cancer, heart disease, diabetes, arthritis and other degenerative diseases. Lifestyle diseases were then unheard of.

In Panama, coco oil is used as a health drink/tonic to help fight illness. Jamaicans believe the oil strengthens the heart. Generations of Filipinos have used it for cooking and treating baldness, dandruff, itchy scalp and to nourish the hair and skin.

The 2,500 residents of Pukapuka and Tokelau atolls in the northern Cook Islands have been closely observed since the early '60s. The people subsist on coconut, root crops, fish, chicken and pork. Coconut water, milk and meat are their staple. Test results show that, despite a high-fat diet, there are no cases of clogged arteries and other heart problems, colon cancer, ulcers and appendicitis on the atolls.

Heart-friendly

Although coco oil is considered saturated fat (known as the bad fat), so far no legitimate research has shown that it raises blood cholesterol levels when consumed. Perhaps it is because coco oil is a medium chain fat, which doesn't stay long in the body because it is used primarily for energy. It seems not to stay long enough to become body fat or cholesterol.

"While coconut oil's direct effect on blood cholesterol [is] neutral, it may indirectly lower LDL [bad] cholesterol and increase HDL [good] cholesterol" because it stimulates the metabolism. Low metabolism reportedly increases bad blood cholesterol levels. Coco oil protects against high cholesterol by producing energy, not fat. The oil also fights infection and has anti-bacterial/anti-viral, anti-fungal properties.

AIDS fighter

Dr. Fife tells the story of Chris Dafoe, an AIDS patient from Indiana, United States, who, in September 1996, decided to take one last trip. After making arrangements for his funeral, he left for Surinam off the coast of South America. There he lived with Indians and ate a diet consisting only of cooked coconut and coco milk.

After six weeks, he regained the 32 pounds he originally lost and felt better. When he underwent new laboratory tests, his viral load was down to "undetectable levels." The amount of HIV in his system was no longer measurable. Today, he continues to eat coconut with his cereal at breakfast convinced it keeps his HIV under control.

Daily dose

Dr. Fife says adults should take 3½ tbsp of coconut oil daily. But there are more palatable ways to enjoy it.

Fruit smoothie

Mix 1½ cups coconut milk (fresh is best) with any fruit like mango, papaya, peach, strawberries, etc. in a blender. This drink is enough for your daily dose.

Hot cereal

You can add a tablespoon of coco oil in your cereal and ¼ cup of coco milk in your cereal or oatmeal.

Soupy delight

2 14-oz cans of coco milk (or fresh if you wish)
¼ c water
2 c asparagus/broccoli/cauliflower
4 tbsp coco oil
6 tbsp flour
¼ c onion
½ c celery
½ tbsp marjoram
Salt and pepper

Heat the oil, add flour and stir till golden brown. Add onions, celery, veggie and sauté for 5 minutes. Add coco milk. Cook for 10 minutes. Add seasoning. Blend the ingredients to make a creamy soup.

Beauty rub

After a warm bath, rub virgin coco oil all over your body. In 10 minutes, your skin (including your face) will feel smoother.

Love and light!

Call International Pharmaceuticals Inc. (Sun Valley Foods) at (032) 2310675 (Cebu) or e-mail admin@ipi-phil.com

Relief for tired shoppers

BODY Tune, the first spa to open inside a mall, aims to give shoppers an opportunity to relax after hours of busy shopping.

Owner/manager Stephen Sia said, with the outlet at SM North Edsa in Quezon City, shoppers would have a place for relaxation if they feel a need for it.

Body Tune offers the three-hour traditional Thai massage from therapists who trained in the famous Thai Wat Po Temple.

Also available are Swedish and shiatsu massages, popular massage treatments, and aromatherapy massages that use pure essential oils and a unique system of massage that stimulates the circulation and brings relief to the whole body.

Foot and hand treatments include Thai and reflexology foot massage, hand massage, foot spa and spa manicure and pedicure.

Full body treatments include Dead Sea salt body scrub, seaweed/sea salt polishing scrub, moor mud body wrap, whitening scrub, seaweed slimming mud wrap, oatmeal nourishing buff, honey body polish and body bleaching.

Body Tune's Skindulgence non-surgical facelift system is a 30-minute treatment that diminishes the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles, improves skin tone and color and firms up facial and neck muscles. The special stone massage therapy uses hot basalt and cold marble stones.

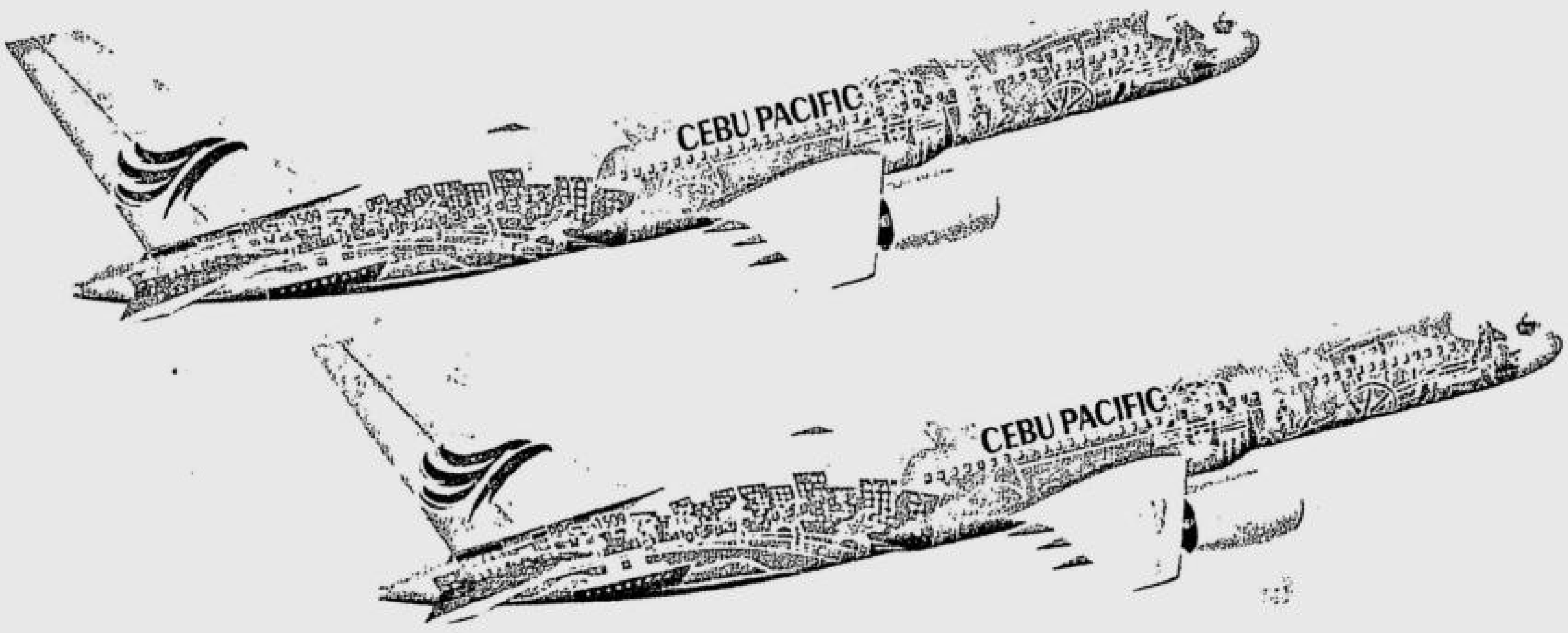
Body Tune has branches in SM malls at North Edsa, Pampanga, South Mall, Bicutan, Bacoor, Cebu and Marilao, Bulacan. Call 9269654.

END an exhausting shopping day with a massage right in the mall.

Heavy-duty luggage : P15,000

Tri-band cellphone : P25,000

Top-of-the-line digicam : P35,000



Gearing up for much-awaited free trips: priceless

SWIPE, SWIPE & AWAY

Get a chance to win one of four travel packages with MasterCard and Cebu Pacific.

Every MasterCard transaction worth P1000 at Cebu Pacific (for airfare or tour packages) gives you one raffle entry that brings you closer to a priceless vacation for two in exciting Hong Kong. Or trip for two to Boracay, Cebu or Davao. All trips include free airfare, world-class accommodations, and pocket money of up to P50,000 (credited to your MasterCard card.) All you need to bring is someone special and your MasterCard card.

HOW TO JOIN: Call the IVRS Hotline numbers 689-1000, 914-1100, and 1-800-107-250-000 (for provincial calls) or email at mastercard@1isa.com and register your 16-digit MasterCard card number, transaction date, transaction amount, and transaction time as shown in your charge slip.

MasterCard

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Promo runs from March 22 to May 31, 2004 only. See flyers for details.

Per DTI-NCR Permit no. 0818, series of 2004.

For feedback, text us at (0918) 382-4061 or (0916) 200-1160
or e-mail us at pr_lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

LIFESTYLE

ILLUSTRATION: ANTHONY MISTADES

Exercises for a healthy heart will also give you a tighter behind

Firm up your rear end

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Juan

WHO doesn't wish for a firmer behind? While it's true that genetics influence the shape of your buttocks, exercises can go a long way.

Whether you want to add bulk and mass to "flat" buttocks or lift "droopy" ones, the exercises are the same. The difference is in the amount of weight needed for resistance and the number of repetitions.

The aerobic activity you choose can also firm up what was once "high and tight" and is now "low and loose." Step aerobics, a step machine, an elliptical trainer, a recumbent stationary bike, walking uphill, fencing and roller-blading are some cardiovascular exercises that are good for your heart and your gluteus maximus (aptly named because it is the largest muscle in the body).

If you want to add more bulk to your glutes, then increase the resistance on that

FIRM/D4

The Maya Kitchen
CULINARY ARTS CENTER

SUMMER KIDDIE AND TEENS KITCHEN FUN

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ILLUSTRATION: ANTHONY MISTADES

Exercises for a healthy heart will also give you a tighter behind

Firm up your rear end

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Juan

WHO doesn't wish for a firmer behind? While it's true that genetics influence the shape of your buttocks, exercises can go a long way.

Whether you want to add bulk and mass to "flat" buttocks or lift "droopy" ones, the exercises are the same. The difference is in the amount of weight needed for resistance and the number of repetitions.

The aerobic activity you choose can also firm up what was once "high and tight" and is now "low and loose." Step aerobics, a step machine, an elliptical trainer, a recumbent stationary bike, walking uphill, fencing and roller-blading are some cardiovascular exercises that are good for your heart and your gluteus maximus (aptly named because it is the largest muscle in the body).

If you want to add more bulk to your glutes, then increase the resistance on that

FIRM/ D4

The Maya Kitchen
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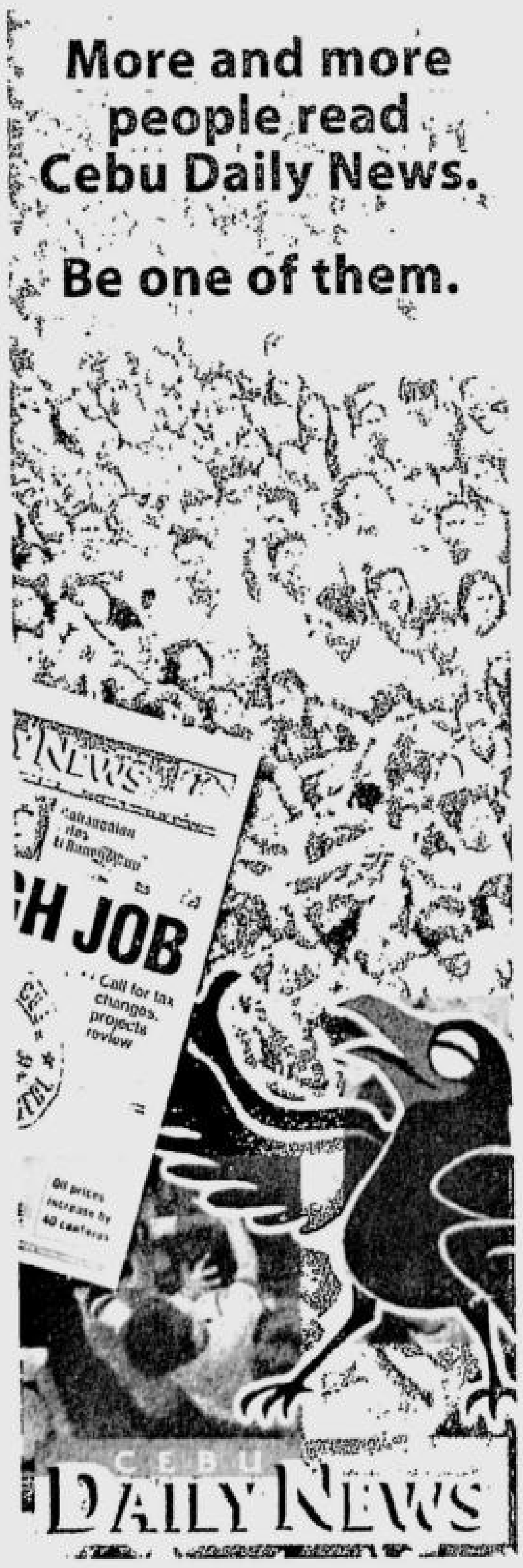
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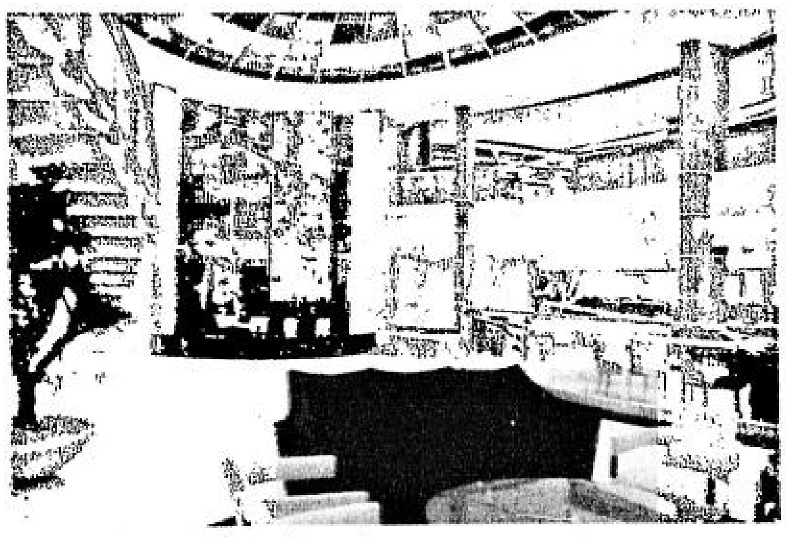
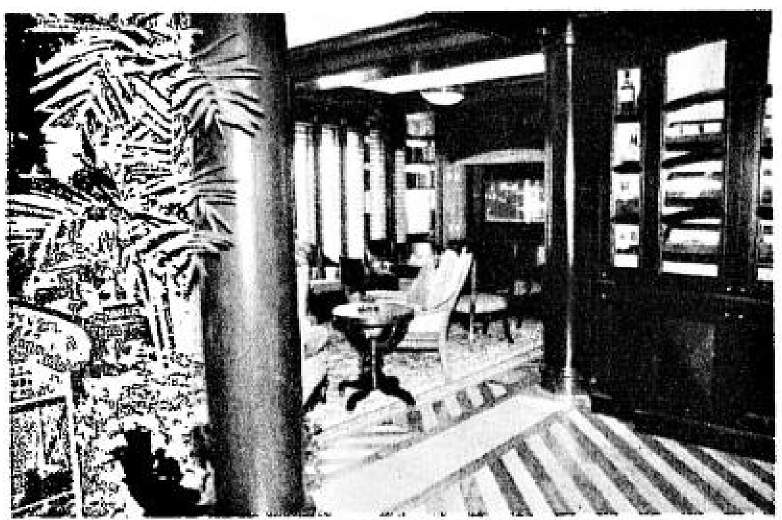
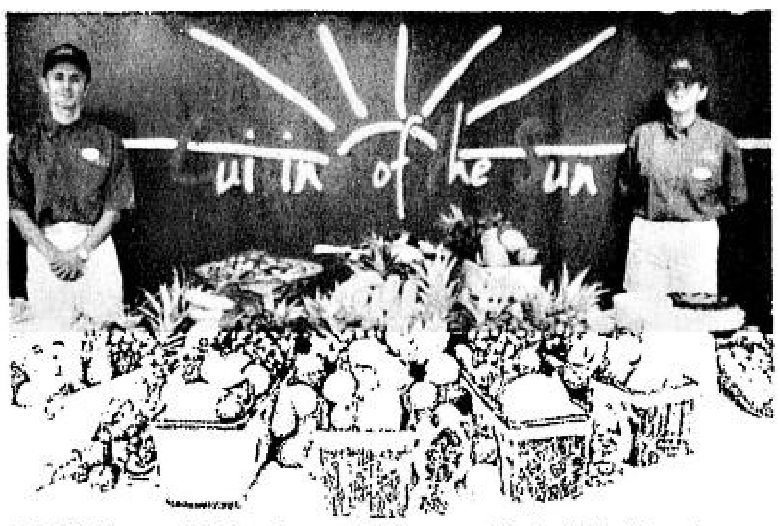


ATRIUM lobby of Crystal Serenity

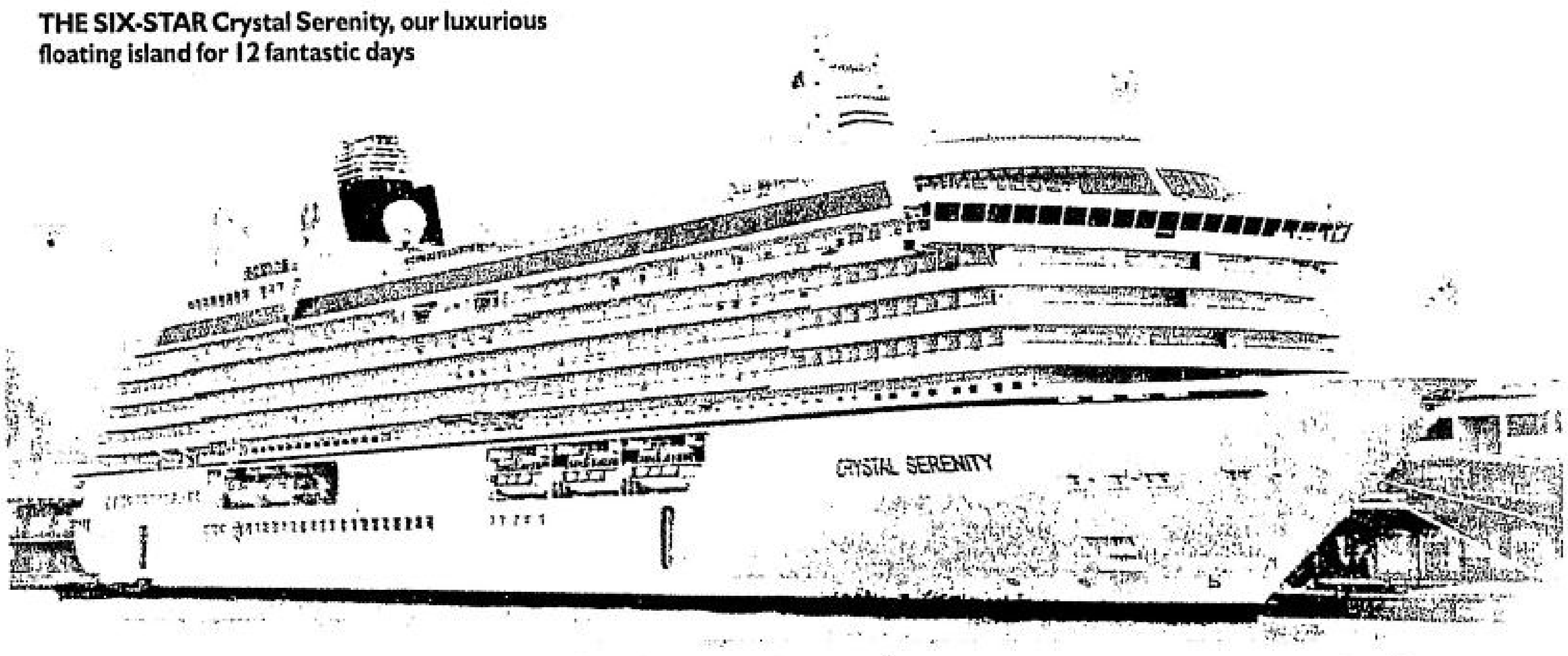


THE *TRES* elegant Cigar Room where the rich and famous enjoy the best cigars from all over the world



DURING a poolside barbecue, tables were filled with fruits and healthy low- and fat-free desserts

THE SIX-STAR Crystal Serenity, our luxurious floating island for 12 fantastic days



WAITERS of Tastes at the Lido Deck 12. (left) Nerick Jordan, Robert Capito, Renato Capito; (right) Richard Arnaldo, Albert Jerome, Michael Ledesma, Michael Margate and Demilin Mauricio

Playgrounds of the rich and famous

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by **Alex Van Hagen** on **Kodak Max**

CRYSTAL Cruises aims to provide the best large luxury cruise ship experience in the world. An important part of the Crystal Difference is the opportunity to cruise with other sophisticated and well-traveled persons from all over the world. The cuisine, the fab ambiance, the excellent service, the chi-chi restaurants... and all the space... ahh!

But the best part, *palanggas*, was our Penthouse suites complete with a blonde, blue-eyed Nordic butler called **Klaus**. Our suite, in rich mahogany and rosewood, made me feel I was not in a floating palace but in some famous snazzy hotel in Cape Town or Berlin.

A huge living area, big private verandah, complimentary bottles of red and white wine upon embarkation, daily supplies of all-you-can-drink soda, beer and bottled water; separate dresser and writing table, a large walk-in closet, flat screen Plasma television with DVD and CD players, and, in the bathroom, a full Jacuzzi, separate shower and twin wash basins.

Now, dahlings, if that ain't classy, I don't know what is.

We continued our cruise, down the Adriatic, enjoying the endless facilities on board, all the fat-free ice cream we could dig into after 10 laps around the promenade deck, passing by the well-packed library where fun **Ronnie Espina**, the Filipino librarian, always had a big smile.

At The Studio, **Bimbo G.** was learning French by Berlitz, with other passengers.

On the sixth day, another Filipino crew member, pianist **Pat Calisura** played "Speak Softly Love" from "The Godfather" at the Atrium Lobby as the Crystal Serenity docked in Messina, in the heart of Sicily.

Mob's home turf

Fascinating Sicily is, naturellement, a rich blend of culture. Sicilian cooking is to-die for.

So beautiful is Sicily that the Italian "mob" (which you forget exists) calls this island "home." The whole region is among the summer spots in the Mediterranean.

While most Crystal Serenity passengers took the shuttle to Taormina, some trekking to the Etna Volcano, **Alex** and *moi* braved the drizzle and walked the streets of Messina as the whole island enjoyed a siesta.

Naples, *palanggas*, known for, among others Neapolitan Pizza, was our next port-of-call. Napoli (in Italian), also called "Magna Grecia," is considered the capital of southern Italy. The name immediately conjures a kaleidoscope of brilliant pictures—varied, vivid, well-defined and sometimes contrasting.

Florence was next on our Italian itinerary. The capital of Italy from 1865-1871, it is about two hours from Livorno, where Crystal Cruises docked. In Florence, we purchased a "hop-on, hop off bus" ticket to see the sights.

Meeting 'David'

Florence is where masters Michelangelo, Guicciardini and others created unparalleled works of art. It was once ruled by the powerful Medici family, supported by the Emperor and the Pope.

We braved the long lines to catch a glimpse of the magnificent and famous statue David at the Academy Gallery, done when Michelangelo was only 26 years young.

In Florence, I had a long chat with one of Manille's beauties, **Mai-Mai Cojuangco**, who now works in that city of art and romance.

After a night at sea, a dazzling sun welcomed us in Villefranche, a small *tres charmant* town in the French Rivieras where we spent two full days. Villefranche is the gateway to the famous Cote d'Azur, where the world's rich and famous dine, dance, drink, see and are seen.

We visited the 14th century Chapelle St. Pierre near the town's citadel, built by the Duke of Savoy in the mid-16th century. The 400-year-old citadel has five museums.

Villefranche is a few minutes away from Monaco, Monte Carlo, a principality on the Mediterranean coastline.

'Face value'

Southern gentry **Eduardo "Nene" Lacson** took time out from his busy banking schedule and brought us to his stunning hillside villa. We lunched at the world-famous Café de Paris. The queue was so long it seemed like all the 1,077 passengers of the Crystal Serenity were there, too. Eduardo, a long-time Monaco resident, is a frequent diner at the café (among the best places in Cote d'Azur) so the maitre d', upon seeing him, whisked us off to one of the best tables.

The next day it was Nice. First a stroll down the Promenades des Anglais, then the Vieille Ville or old town, where we went window shopping.

After the captain's cocktail and dinner reception the next evening, we arrived at the stunning capital of Catalonia, Spain—Barcelona, named by Time magazine "the European City of Today" and "Most 'in' City" in Europe.

Barcelona is an ancient port on the Balearic Sea. There's some Arabic influence here since Northern Africa is a few sailing days away.

During our four-day stay, we went to Las Rambas, the heart of the city, almost every day for the yummy Moroccan Falafa sandwich.

Builder of 'sand castles'

Barcelona is where **Antoni Gaudi**, the turn-of-the century architect and genius, did his works that resembled a child's fantasy sand castles. One of his most famous works is the Sagrada Familia Church, which is over 550 ft tall and undergoing construction until now.

After our 12th and last night in our beautiful Penthouse suite in the six-star Crystal Serenity, we moved to our "home" in the Catalonian capital, a gorgeous one-bedroom suite at the venerable, exclusive Club InterContinental Executive Floors, atop the super popular Princess Sofia InterContinental Hotel Barcelona. Our stay was graciously arranged by Hotel InterContinental Manila general manager, popular **Stefan Voogel**, and mega director of public relations **Jennifer Peña**.

Named after Her Majesty, Queen Sofia (when she was still a princess), the hotel has hosted the most important political and business personalities.

The five-star hotel gave us our taste of Barcelona and Catalonia my Canapes at the Club InterContinental Lounge were Catalonia specialties downed with local wines.

The Princesa Sofia InterContinental Barcelona is on Avenida Diagonal in the heart of the business, residential and exclusive shopping district of Barcelona, a five-minute walk from one of the largest branches of the renowned El Corte Ingles.

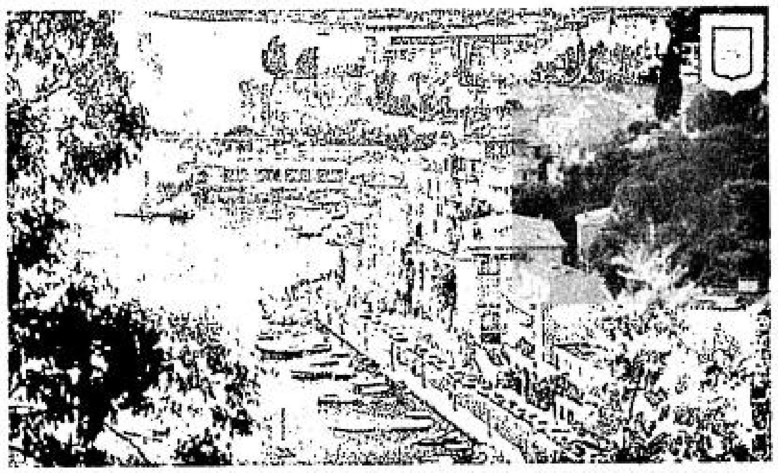
When it was time to go home, super Lufthansa flew us Business Class to Frankfurt with German efficiency. Delayed in Barcelona, we barely caught our connection to Manille.

I never thought **Bimpo Gapud** could run but he had to. Ten minutes to catch a flight in one of the world's largest airports is no laughing matter.

Lufthansa, the flag carrier of the land where efficiency is religion, doesn't disappoint. When we got to Manille, in spite of the short 10-minute connecting time in Frankfurt, all our checked-in bags were there. Job well done Lufthansa! Visit them at their new office at Rockwell.

So if you want to take a super, top-of-the-line cruise check out Crystal Cruises' six-star vessels. Call Nanette or Lala, tel. 5248681/84 or 5268406/08, or 4006041. Better yet, visit any American Express Adventure International office for a free Crystal Cruises 2004 brochure. Lufthansa flies daily from Manille to Frankfurt, with immediate connections to the rest of Europe and Africa, *palanggas*.

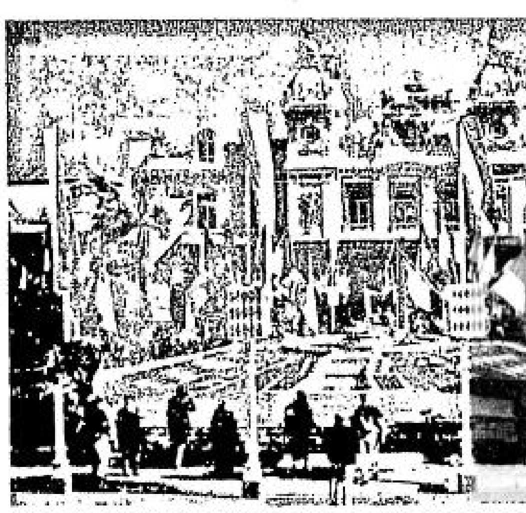
THE FAMOUS La Promenade des Anglais in Nice, Cote d' Azur



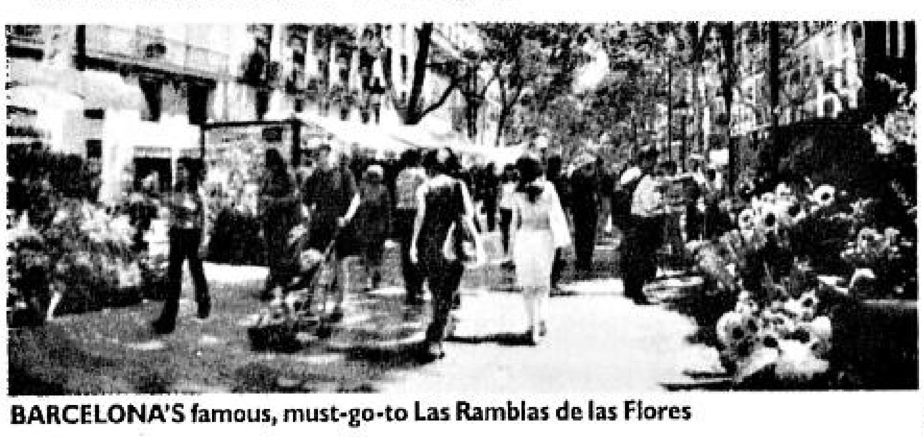
PICTURE-PERFECT cove of Villefranche-sur-Mer at the Cote d'Azur in the French Riviera

THE GORGEOUS Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Nice

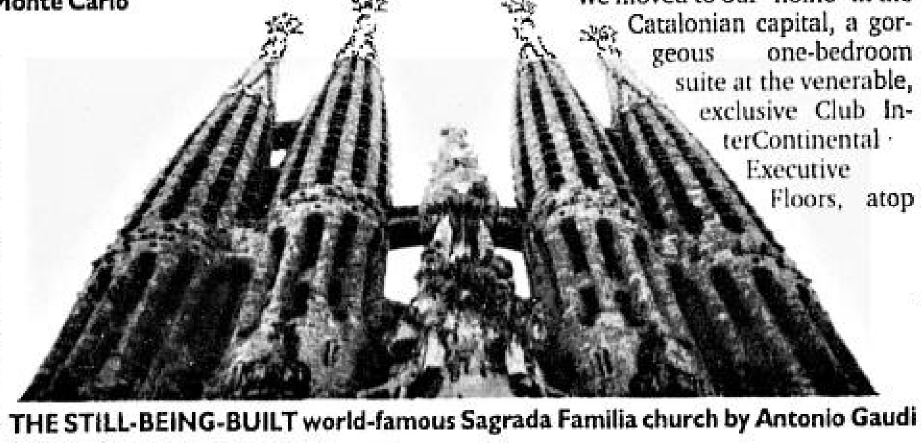
SINFUL calorific desserts on Crystal Serenity's grand eat-all-you-can day



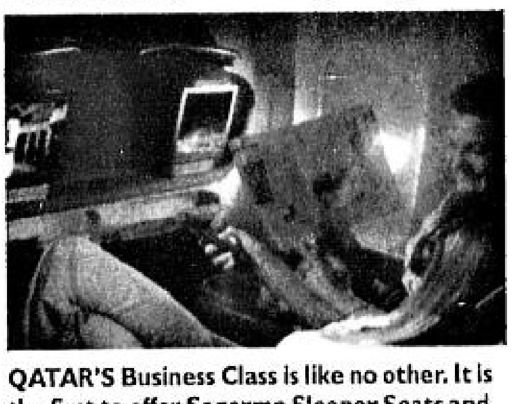
THE BREATHTAKING Casino de Monte Carlo



BARCELONA'S famous, must-go-to Las Ramblas de las Flores



THE STILL-BEING-BUILT world-famous Sagrada Familia church by Antonio Gaudi in Barcelona



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1st Monthly Draw
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Draw Date: May 31, 2004

Sony Mini DV Camcorder (2 winners)
Sony Playstation 2 with 53 34cm Sony WEGA TV (4 winners)
Sony Mini Hi-Fi (6 winners)
Sony DVD Home Theater System(5 winners)
Sony MD Walkman with AM/FM tuner(5 winners)

2nd Monthly Draw
Gadgets Upgrade
Draw Date: June 30, 2004

Nokia 6600 (8 winners)
Sony Ericsson P900 (2 winners)
Sony Ericsson T630 (8 winners)
Sony DSC-T1 5.0 megapixel digital camera (2 winners)
Compaq Presario 2585 notebook computer (2 winners)

3rd Monthly Draw
Lifestyle Upgrade
Draw Date: July 30, 2004

P35,000 Gift Certificate for Gold's Gym (4 winners)
P30 000 Power Plant Mall at Rockwell and The Podium shopping cash credits (6 winners)
P25,000 Nike Stadium and Planet Sports shopping cash credits (4 winners)
P30,000 Time Depot and G-Factory shopping cash credits (4 winners)
P30,000 Gift Certificate to The Spa (4 winners)

Grand Draw
Draw Date: August 30, 2004

Grand Prize: P 1 million

High-Life Prizes

Sony 109 22cm Real Projection TV(2 winners)
Top-of-the-line Compaq Presario 2517 notebook computer (2 winners)
P100,000 shopping spree cash credits in Greenbelt 3 and 4, Power Plant Mall at Rockwell and The Podium (4 winners)
Sony 86 36 cm Wega TV with home theater system (2 winners)

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See flyers for details. Per DTI NCR Permit No.1730 series of 2004

Firm up your rear end

From page D1

stepper or recumbent bike. If you only want definition, keep the resistance light.

Variations on a theme

The primary exercises to increase mass in the buttocks are variations of squats and lunges, also called compound exercises since they involve other major muscles. Be prepared to eventually lift a fairly heavy amount of weight since the buttocks are a large muscle.

The exercises also work the front and back of the thighs. Which is just as well, since buttocks that need mass are usually attached to thin legs, which also need some filling out.

If you only want to define and lift your rear, don't be scared of squats and lunges—just don't lift heavy weights. Go for more (15 to 20), rather than less, repetitions.

Isolation exercises specifically target the buttocks and the hamstrings or the back of the thighs, which share the same function—lifting your leg behind you or lifting your body upward from a bent-knee position.

More weight, more bulk

Again, if you want bulk, use more weight and less repetitions per set (8-12). If you want definition and toning, use less weight and more reps.

To make the most of your isolation exercises and to protect your lower back, make sure to squeeze your buttocks before you even move your leg backward. You don't need a very large range of motions to achieve results. Moving with momentum will only strain your lower back. Move in slow, controlled motion.

"A moment on your lips, forever on your hips" is not too far from the truth. Any excess calories will be stored in your hips and thighs if you are genetically predisposed to store fat that way. So, if a fatty behind is the problem, remember that what you eat plays a major role in keeping your measurements under control.

Blame estrogen

Sometimes, however, even if you watch what you eat and exercise religiously, the rest of your body slims down but your hips, buttocks and thighs stubbornly refuse to budge.

Scientists believe this has something to do with the reproductive process. Estrogen multiplies fat-storing enzymes and directs fat to be stored in a woman's lower body. Cells in that area contain more fat storing receptors. It seems Mother Nature has made sure that a woman has an abundant store of fat to stay fertile, carry a pregnancy to term and breast-feed even when food is scarce.

This doesn't mean you should give up eating sensibly and exercising regularly. You can still reduce your hips, buttocks and thighs considerably. However, you do have to be realistic and accept that your buttocks may always be larger than you like.

Some people resort to liposuction to get rid of fat in the lower body. This is certainly a quick way to achieve dramatic results but, if you choose this option, make sure to control what goes into your mouth and continue exercising. Fat has a funny way of showing up in the strangest of places. Don't get overconfident and eat up a storm.

Temporary relief

The buttocks and back of the legs are also famous for having not-so-cute dimples. This is because, aside from being fat depositories, a woman's skin is quite thin and wavy in that area. Here is where the anti-cellulite creams and gels come into the picture. They tighten the skin in that area temporarily. If this helps you feel better about your figure and you have money to spare, then get some. Just don't believe outrageous claims about "melting your fat away."

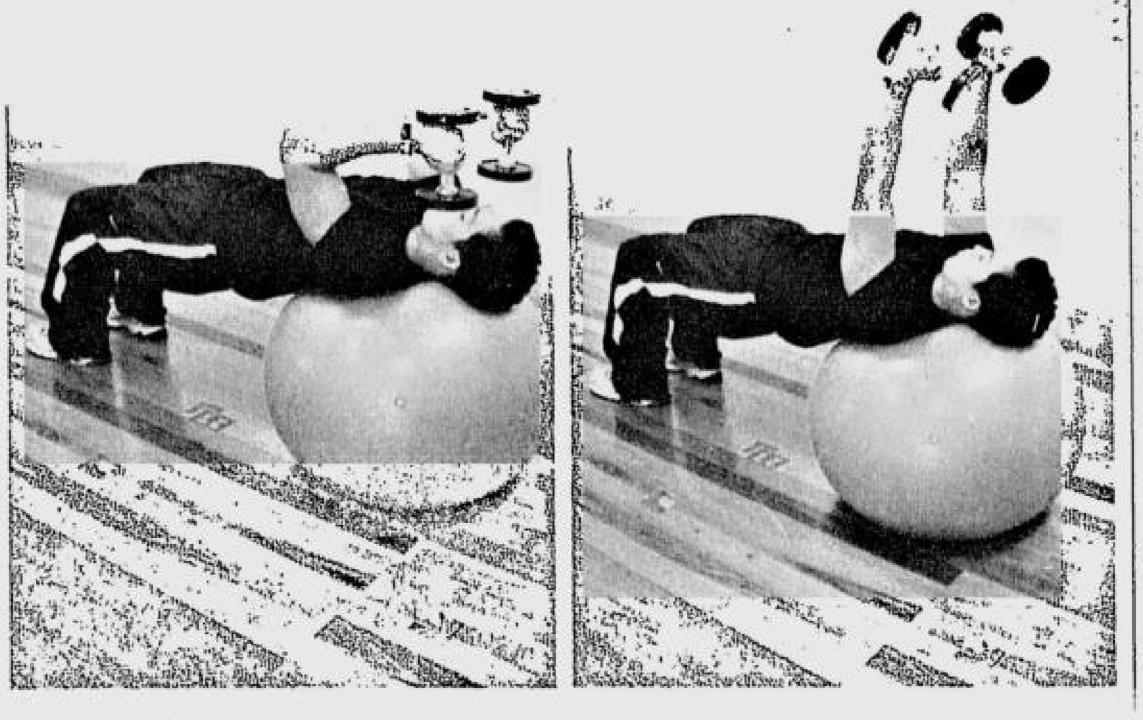
Cellulite-riddled buttocks and thighs look better when the muscles underneath are firm and tight. Here are exercises that can help.

- www.tinajuanfitness.info/exercises/chairbuttlift.html
- www.tinajuanfitness.info/exercises/tableassistedbuttockslift.html
- www.tinajuanfitness.info/exercises/oneleggedsquat.html
- www.tinajuanfitness.info/exercises/stepbenchbacklunge.html

Lastly, there is one exercise you can do anywhere—well, almost. Just clench the cheeks of your buttocks together as hard as you can (remember to breathe) for about 10-15 seconds. If you can do this many times throughout the day, you will be rewarded with a firmer derriere. A word of caution, though. If you intend to do this while waiting in line, for example, make sure you aren't wearing tight pants and no one is standing behind you.

Visit www.tinajuanfitness.info

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK



Supine tricep extension on stability ball

THIS exercise firms up the triceps or muscles at the back of your arms, "core" muscles (abs, trunk, lower back) as well as the buttocks and hamstrings.

Equipment:

Stability ball, dumbbells. A gym bench or bed can be used as a substitute for the ball.

Exercise technique:

1. Start by sitting on the ball with the dumbbells held close to your chest with your arms bent (not shown).
2. Move your feet forward as you simultaneously lower your upper body until you are in a table-top position with your buttocks in line with your shoulders.
3. Take your arms overhead with the palms facing each other. Slowly bend your elbows. This is your starting position.
4. Without moving your shoulders, straighten your arms as you exhale. Inhale as you bend the elbows back to starting position.
5. Do the desired number of repetitions.

Performance tips:

1. This is an exercise that should only be attempted by someone experienced with using a stability ball.
2. To protect yourself, use a ball that is anti-burst meaning a ball that will deflate slowly if punctured and will not collapse suddenly under you.
3. Use a reasonable amount of weight. This exercise is not meant to lift very heavy weights. Emphasis is on control and challenge of the core.
4. Keep your buttocks contracted so that hips stay level with the shoulders.
5. Straighten your arms slowly and with control. Avoid jerking the dumbbells and "locking" your elbows.

Repetitions:

Do 12-15 repetitions. One or two sets.

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